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ABSTRACT

Seventeen essays direct attention to the lives and achievements of outstanding women in Nebraska history. Most of the women described in the essays did their major work in literature, the arts, education, or some other related human service. Only two essays are not focused on specific women--"Union Maids in Omaha Labor History, 1887-1945," which depicts the role of Nebraska women in the labor movement, and "The Community Builder: Architects of Nebraska," which emphasizes the role that women played in establishing social and civic order, education, and artistic endeavors in their communities. Two essays focus on Native Americans Angel DeCora Dietz (a Winnebago artist and teacher) and the LaFlesche sisters (activists for Indian rights). Remaining essays focus on the lives of other outstanding women, including Dorothy Creigh, writer and authority on the human drama of Nebraska; Leta S. Hollingworth, internationally known psychologist; Virginia Faulker and Bernice Slote, scholars of Willa Cather; Tillie Olsen, author, organizer, and feminist; Sirilda Belva Spicer, black educator and minister; Willa Cather, renowned novelist; Doris Stevens, social activist; Bess Streeter Aldrich, celebrant of the "traditional" woman; Louise Pound, scholar and author; Rose Rosicky, newspaper woman; Elizabeth Honor Dolan, international muralist; Mari Sandoz, historian, biographer, and novelist; and Bess Furman Armstrong, political journalist and press secretary for Eleanor Roosevelt. (LH)

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NEBRASKA STATE COUNCIL
FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

PERSPECTIVES:
Women in Nebraska History

June
1984
SPECIAL ISSUE

Nebraska Department of Education
and the
Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies

Joe E. Lutjeharms
Commissioner of Education
Nebraska Department of Education

PERSPECTIVES
Women in Nebraska History

1984
SPECIAL ISSUE

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Dorothy Weyer Creigh and is jointly sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies.

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FOREWORD

We would like to thank the Executive Committee, the editors, and the membership of the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies for their fine cooperation in working with our staff on this issue of *Perspectives.* It is a pleasure to have the Nebraska Department of Education involved in a project like this which details, to some extent, the lives of some of the important women in Nebraska history.

Of course, we are delighted to honor the memory of Dorothy Weyer Creigh whose enthusiasm for "spreading the word" about Nebraska and its people was second to none. She was also very enthusiastic in her support for education, believing as she did, that the hope of our people and the future of our state rest on a solid educational foundation which needs to be adequately financed and encouraged if it is to continue to maintain high standards. To this end, Dorothy Weyer Creigh worked eight years as a member of the Nebraska State Board of Education.

Like the other women discussed in this publication, Dorothy Weyer Creigh would never accept less than the best in anything. For this personal quality and also for all of her other wonderful personal qualities and professional contributions to education, we are pleased to honor her memory by issuing this publication about her work and that of other Nebraska women who also struggled to achieve their own dreams, thereby enriching all of us.

Joe E. Lutjeharms
Commissioner of Education
Nebraska Department of Education

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The focus of history has traditionally been on men and their worlds--business, diplomacy, and politics. Until the past few years, the history of women has gone largely unnoticed. The scholarly efforts of many women and men are now bringing much attention to the American women, thus adding another dimension to our history.

Women in Nebraska have indeed had a role in shaping the course of our state and nation. This publication has been prepared in an effort to direct attention to the lives and the achievements of a few of these women in Nebraska's history. They worked very hard to break down the barriers that prevented so many of their sex from making achievements outside the traditional roles of wife and mother.

Because of our desire to honor Dorothy Weyer Creigh and her many contributions to the schools and the educators in the State of Nebraska, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies are jointly sponsoring this special issue of *Perspectives*. It is our hope that Dorothy Creigh's many achievements will serve as an inspiration to our Nebraska educators and that her life will serve as a model to other women who find themselves attempting to serve humankind in so many roles--wife, mother, teacher, scholar, clubwoman, and many others.

The Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies would like to extend a special thanks to all of the people who devoted so much time and effort to writing, editing, and typesetting the essays in this very special issue of *Perspectives*, for it is their creative genius and hard work after all that have made this undertaking a success.

Susan Pierce
Editor, *Perspectives*

DEDICATION

The Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies officially dedicate this special issue of *Perspectives* to the memory of Dorothy Weyer Creigh, a woman who not only wrote many books and articles about Nebraska but who also cared enough about the education of Nebraska youngsters to serve on the Nebraska State Board of Education for eight years.

The Nebraska State Department of Education and the Nebraska Council for the Social Studies also wish to honor both the memories of the countless numbers of women who came to the frontier and like Dorothy Weyer Creigh, took hold "wherever they were planted and bloomed" and also the Native American women who were already living here. Through their struggles and the fulfillment of their personal visions in Nebraska, they made it possible for us to enjoy a life of abundance and comfort in "the Great American Desert."

Dorothy Weyer Creigh
1921-1982

TO DOROTHY CREIGH, 1921-1982*

-Paul G. Johnson

In the pain and the silences
you have left behind,
we have many memories of the hours
you dedicated to others.

Those of us who knew you
will miss you.
Even in troubled times,
your radiating smile
was like a candle in a dark room.
Your offhand elegance and
your old world charm
dazzled us and left us enchanted.

Now, in our despair,
the lip on our cup trembles,
but we do not falter.
We turn back to our memories
of you for sustenance.
We are reminded of your
fiercely independent spirit,
your strength of character,
your courage,
and your dedication to excellence
in all things.

Most of all, though, we are reminded
of your hope for the future, and
we are comforted and strengthened.
We are able to go on.

You have made one of life's dramatic turns,
and have ascended into a most holy place.
You will leave sunlit shadows
on the walls of Heaven.

In your journey, may you remain
as pure as gold and as geniune
as a handful of good Nebraska earth.

In the fields of flowers,
may you rest in perfect peace,
your work done,
your name assured.

Oh, Dorothy!
We shall miss you!
Oh, Dorothy! We shall miss you so!

*Written and read as "A Tribute to Dorothy Weyer Creigh" at the February 12, 1982, Nebraska State Board of Education meeting.

WOMEN IN NEBRASKA HISTORY:
An Introduction

For several years, the Editors and the Executive Committee of the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies have discussed the possibility of publishing an issue of *Perspectives* that would be devoted entirely to women in Nebraska History. It was agreed that for the most part women would write about their female predecessors. All of these essays, except three, were written by women.

In the early part of 1982, the idea began to take definite shape. The Nebraska Department of Education was trying to think of some way to honor the memory of Dorothy Weyer Creigh, a member of the Nebraska State Board of Education who was recently deceased. Not only had Creigh supported education at the state level, but she had also made significant contributions to her community as a wife, mother, and teacher; as a writer of Nebraska history; and as a consultant on the organization and operation of historical societies. At that time, the Executive Committee of the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies and Dr. Anne Campbell, then Commissioner of Education, agreed that joint publication of a set of essays on Nebraska women in an issue of *Perspectives*, dedicated to the memory of Dorothy Creigh, would be an appropriate action to take. Obviously, Dorothy Weyer Creigh had a very close connection to public education: she had been both a teacher and a member of the State Board.

When we first agreed to be the guest editors for this issue of *Perspectives*, we were not completely naive. We did realize that there would be an enormous amount of work to be done, but we were enthusiastic about the project anyway. We began immediately to search for assistance. First, we asked other people to recommend the names of women whom they thought should be included in this publication. Since we received a large number of names, we decided to limit the subjects to those who had already made their major contributions to their careers or who were deceased. Our next task was to find scholars who were interested in writing about the subjects we had chosen for the essays. After much discussion and searching, we settled on seventeen essays, two of which are not focused on specific women.

The two essays which are not focused on specific women are "Union Maids in Omaha Labor History 1887-1945" by Professor William C. Pratt at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and "The Community Builder: Architects of Nebraska" by Sherrill Daniels. The purpose of using the "Union Maids. . ." essay was to show that Nebraska women were indeed active in the labor movement in Omaha even though they did not enjoy prominent positions as leaders in that movement. In the other general essay, "The Community Builder. . .," Sherrill Daniels, emphasizes the important role that women played in establishing social and civic order, education, and artistic endeavors in their respective communities. Two of the more specific essays are focused on Native Americans, Angel DeCora was a Winnebago artist and teacher who succeeded despite both personal and cultural restrictions. This essay was written by Sarah McAnnulty Quilter. Anne P. Diffendal wrote about the better-known

LaFlesche sisters and their achievements in both the "white world" and the "Indian world." Marilyn Johnson has given us a brief but warm portrait of Belva Spicer, a black woman who also "went against" traditions and customs and became a minister.

A Nebraska woman whose artistic achievements tend to overwhelm one was Elizabeth Honor Dolan, who painted the background murals in Morrill Hall. Her eccentric and delightful life has been chronicled by Connie L. Stevens, a recent graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

One woman whose life touched many other lives was Willa Cather. Susan Rosowski has described how Cather used time as a literary device in many of her novels. Professor Robert Knoll has taken a more personal look at the two Nebraska women whose careers have been very closely tied to both Cather's life and work and to each other's careers. They are Virginia Faulkner and Bernice Slote who have individually and together devoted much of their own careers to explaining and delineating Willa Cather's literary contributions to Nebraska, this region, and the nation.

Two Nebraska women whose lives were probably not as difficult as those of some of the women mentioned above were Rose Rosicky and Bess Furman Armstrong. Both began their newspaper carers early, working on their father's newspapers. According to Marjorie Sobotka's highly personal acount of Rosicky's life, Rosicky lived in Omaha and continued working on the paper even after her father's death. On the other hand, Bess Furman Armstrong traveled extensively. At one time, she served as press secretary for Eleanor Roosevelt with whom she established a warm, personal relationship. The entertaining journalist's characterization of her was written by Vicki Bagrowski.

The woman whose writings were probably best loved by Nebraskans was Bess Streeter Aldrich. According to Carol Miles Petersen, Aldrich was a "traditional woman" who had the courage to write about the things that were most dear to her: family, home, community, and region. She will be long-remembered for her heart warming portrayals of "ordinary" people.

The essay on Dorothy Weyer Creigh was written by Loretta Johnson who teaches history at Kearney State College. According to the Creigh portrait given us by Johnson, Dorothy Weyer Creigh had much in common with most of these women. Like Mari Sandoz, whose biography Helen Stauffer has written, Creigh loved to do research and was not happy until it was "right." Another famous Nebraska researcher was Leta S. Hollingworth, an internationally famous psychologist, whose life has been described by Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr.

Like Virginia Faulkner and Bernice Slote, Creigh was interested in publishing, both her own work and the work of others. She wrote for newspapers, like Rose Rosicky and Bess Furman Armstrong. At one time, she also taught journalism. She was very much the community worker and organizer, much like the women mentioned in "The Community Builder" essay.

According to Jane Hood, Doris Stevens was a very independent woman, who believed in taking direct action. She had much in common with Tillie Olsen whom Linda Ray Pratt has so beautifully portrayed in this book of essays. Creigh was like Stevens and Olsen in that she believed in "woman power." Creigh was not the kind of woman to wait around until someone gave her permission to do something. She just went and did it.

Like Louise Pound, whose scholarly and athletic activities have been described by Anne Cognard, Creigh liked to travel. She had a very restless spirit and seemed interested in almost everyone and everything. Like Aldrich, she had a firm grasp on what was most important to her fellow-Nebraskans. Like few others, she understood the people from which she came.

When we first looked at the essays with the idea of finding some central theme that would tie all of them together, we could not seem to find one theme. There was just so much diversity among the subjects and the treatments given them by the writers. However, the more we looked the more we realized that Dorothy Weyer Creigh was the kind of woman that embodied most of the characteristics of the women whose lives are elucidated in these essays. Dorothy Creigh did, in fact, try to be everyone and do everything. She came about as close to achieving that goal as anyone we know. And she did it with style, with elegance, and with concern for other people.

We are proud to have had a part in developing this project which has taken nigh on to twenty-four months to complete. We would also like to thank the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies and the Nebraska Department of Education for giving us the opportunity to work on such a significant project. Without the assistance and encouragement of Dr. Anne Campbell and Dr. Stan Carlson, as well as the work of the seventeen writers who wrote the essays for publication, this project would never have come to fruition.

Paul G. Johnson
Rosemary Machacek
Guest Editors

DOROTHY CREIGH

Photograph courtesy of the
Thomas Creigh family

DOROTHY WEYER CREIGH
Woman and Writer

by Loretta Turner Johnson

Dr. Loretta Turner Johnson is an Assistant Professor of History and Director of Horizons Program at Kearney State College. She received her B.A. degree from Smith College, her M.A. from Creighton University and her Ph.D. in History from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Johnson is married and has two children.

Dorothy Weyer Creigh was a woman who left her mark on her world. Born, reared, and educated in a staunchly puritanical middle American home in Hastings, Nebraska, she vowed and labored to escape Hastings to the larger arena of writing in the world beyond. But that was not to be. She married and settled in Hastings. . .to "bloom where she was planted."[1]

What mark did Creigh leave? And why does her name join those of the pantheon of notable Nebraska women?

Ironically, in spite of Creigh's desire to flee the state, her major claim to fame was as an authority on Nebraska—as a teller of human drama of Nebraska people. Memorializing Creigh in an *Omaha World-Herald* editorial, Douglas Bereuter noted: "Dorothy Creigh loved Nebraska. She loved to discover the idiosyncracies about 'common, ordinary, garden-variety people' that would make you laugh or cry or glow with pride."[2]

That was Creigh's mark. . .and one reason her name is significant among Nebraska women. Maybe even more exemplary for the needs of other women, however, was Creigh's insistence that she excel in all areas. She wanted success not only as a writer, but also as a mother, wife, friend and civic leader. Creigh made an excellent showing in all of these roles as well as others. Mari Sandoz, whom Creigh idolized and emulated, presented a writing model that required concentration and committed single-mindedness, but Dorothy Weyer Creigh would not choose to limit herself to that one field of expertise. Not only did she face and accede to the social expectations, Dorothy Creigh also became an awesome model of a renaissance woman.

Her professional successes by themselves qualify her as an outstanding woman of achievement. Foremost among them was her role in spearheading and organizing the effort to create the Adams County Historical Society. Although this was a community endeavor, few would deny that Dorothy Creigh's vision, ambition, and gumption were responsible for making the Adams County Historical Society a national model. In the course of this work, she wrote the book most likely to give her immortality in the annals of state and local history: *A Primer for Local Historical Societies*. She wrote other books in this field as well, including the mammoth, exhaustive, and award-winnining *Adams County: A Story of the Great Plains*, and the less than exhaustive *Nebraska: A Bicentennial History*. Nevertheless, the *Primer*, for its succinct, concise usefulness, will probably be labeled her most influential publication.

In another of her many roles, as clubwoman and community activist, Creigh left her mark as well. The Hastings Chamber of Commerce recognized her contributions to the community by naming her Woman of the Year in 1974. There were other civic awards during the years, including the Hastings Sertoma Club's Service to Mankind Award in 1975, the *Hastings Tribune* Tribland Woman of the Year in 1978, Eagles Lodge Aerie 1529 Bicentennial Woman award in 1976, Hastings Beta Sigma Phi Woman of the Year in 1974, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs Outstanding Woman of Achievement of Nebraska in 1979, and the Hastings College Alumni Association Citation of Achievement Award at the 1982 commencement. There is no question about it, Dorothy Creigh was a hard worker; she was dedicated to community development; and she was a woman of many accomplishments.

Creigh also strove to meet her self-imposed high standards as a wife, mother, and friend. The most concrete indication of excellence in this area is her voluminous correspondence. Her letters were stimulating, newsy, and invariably interesting. They were vivid descriptive gems, particularly explicit as to the flora of the region and replete with that schoolgirl enthusiasm and eagerness noticed by Creigh observers.[3] By habit, Creigh made carbon copies of her multipage letters, mailing copies to several groups of friends and relatives, and keeping a copy for herself to serve as a journal. She sought both personal and professional advice and support from her friends, and she gave as she sought. She carried on a "round robin" correspondence with several friends and relatives.[4] Her correspondence with Mari Sandoz also reveals warm-hearted empathy and personal concern.[5]

Family was always an important factor in her life. Creigh loved to travel, to learn for herself, and to teach her children. Her excursions were punctuated by lively conversations and discussions with guides and fellow travelers. A trip to the Indian Ocean in 1970 served as a resource for an article and pictures on the Sooty Tern which appeared in the *National Geographic School Bulletin.*[6] In 1973 for the Creigh's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, Dorothy compiled and published a book of letters and photographs for her children about their trips outside the United States.[7] Dorothy Creigh wanted fame and cherished the rewards of her achievements in every sphere, not only the tangible awards and trophies of community participation, but also the appreciation and enrichment of her family and friends.

All of these factors—professional, civic, and personal—contribute to Dorothy Creigh's significance as an exemplary Nebraska woman. They are, however, only one part of her claim to fame. To reach the other less concrete knowledge of Dorothy Creigh's importance as a model for women, it is necessary to reflect on the process of her life. She was, like many women of her generation, curious, eager to learn, and ever-ready to teach. Like many, she had a particular talent and ambition. Her ambition was to write.

How did she balance her ambition to write with the time-consuming responsibilities of mother, housewife, and clubwoman? How did she handle the challenge of motivating herself in a culture that condemns ambition and assertiveness especially in women whose lives are comfortable? This problem is universal and timeless among women, and it is advantageous for all of us to consider the pitfalls encountered by other women as they make their choices.

Early in life, Dorothy Weyer revealed the bent of the twig. As a grade school youngster, she collected neighborhood tidbits to publish in her own newspaper. While a student at Hastings College (where she graduated *summa cum laude* in 1942), she won first prize and second prize in the Theta Alpha Phi one-act play writing contests of 1939 and 1940. She was the editor of the Hastings College *Collegian*, a weekly, in 1939-40 and of the yearbook, the Hastings College *Bronco*, in 1940-41. Both publications received the All-American Award.

In college, Dorothy Weyer wanted to write, and she wrote. But, already, she was beginning to play one of her many roles. She prepared to undertake a traditionally acceptable "woman's career." In 1942-43, she taught high school English in Central City, Nebraska. She felt constrained by extra-curricular demands and by the requirements of her students' parents. In 1943, she took a job editing the *Powder Keg*, a weekly publication of the Naval Ammunition Depot in Hastings.[8]

After a year with the Navy, she applied for and was named Hitchcock Scholar to the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. At last, Dorothy Weyer was able to escape the personal and professional bonds of Hastings and, moreover, she had the opportunity to pursue the career of her choice. She did well, receiving a gold medal in the Cross competition in libel studies and being named an alternate for a Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship. Her innate enthusiasm for writing and the thrill of achievement in New York City is best illustrated by an anecdote of her father's. One assignment required Dorothy to obtain an interview with a political cartoonist. She suggested one name to her instructor and was discouraged from inquiring because the individual she had chosen was known to be reluctant to grant interviews even to well-known journalists. The instructor asked her to suggest an alternative possibility. Dorothy promised to bring him another name the next day. That, however, was not her plan. Knowing, as her instructor did not, that her primary choice was a man with Hastings' roots, determined, intrepid Dorothy called him up, recalled her own Hastings background to him, and was promptly granted an audience. The next day she presented her professor not with a new name for consideration, but with a completed interview. . .a characteristic Weyer triumph.[9]

After receiving her Master's degree in Journalism in 1945, Creigh landed a job as an Associated Press reporter in Richmond, Virginia. She held this job for one year until she applied for a position with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in 1946 and was sent to China.

Dorothy Creigh had a marvelous time in China. Her reaction on arriving in Shanghai was electric—she felt at home, as though reincarnated from a Chinese past.[10] Stationed in Shanghai and Hankow during her eighteen month stint, she was able to travel freely, visiting Peking and other areas of China. Her excursions were limited only by her budget which also had to pay for a Chinese tutor in the rudiments of language and customs, and for the purchase of artifacts of every kind—embroidery, wood carving, carpets, cloisonne, and lengths of silk fabric to be sent home. Creigh's friends among the international students at Columbia had included one or two Chinese, so she had some familiarity with Chinese culture, In Hankow, her counterpart at the UNRRA desk became a friend. She was, in fact, the only non-Chinese at his wedding. In later years she renewed her acquaintance with him.

Creigh wrote home about her responsibilities for UNRRA which included writing reports on applications for assistance from Chinese businessmen and screening documents, including military bulletins, as such information passed through the UNRRA office. Frequently there was little to do, and for long periods, Creigh was left to her own devices in the office. She used some of her time to write detailed letters to friends and relatives (keeping a copy of each for herself). In these single-spaced, many-paged, typewritten letters, Creigh described China's physiognomy, her own experiences, including the Chinese wedding, and her friends, both native and European. From her new-found international perspective, she occasionally made political observations. She especially deplored what she saw as a mistakenly isolationist tendency in American politics with regard to Russian as well as Chinese communism. Fearing the American media were distorting reports of the Chinese political situation, she urged her parents and friends to publicize what seemed to her to be positive changes in Chinese political and social life.[11]

During this year and a half in China, she also wrote for Chinese periodicals with European readership focusing primarily on Chinese wartime and postwar economic conditions and on the progress of modernity in Chinese farm villages. Dorothy Weyer's experiences in China reaffirmed the primary interests in her life: writing and people.

When Dorothy returned to Hastings late in 1947 on furlough, she never intended to stay. She planned either to return to China or, if that were not possible, to accept another United Nations assignment.[12] During the winter at home, however, she met Thomas Creigh, Jr., a businessman with Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Company. She wanted to marry him so she accepted the necessity of living in Nebraska despite her deep personal reservations.[13] They were married in June, 1948.

Dorothy Weyer Creigh then entered that complex period in her life—the happily-ever-after time—familiar to all women. . .the time when the fulfillment of personal ambitions seems to conflict with the duties and obligations of a woman's function. Having been planted in the Nebraska land, Dorothy had to contrive to bloom there. She obviously made the best—the most of her worlds as wife, mother, social and community activist, and professional writer. But feeling as she did in 1948 about the limits of Nebraska, she would probably have been incredulous had she been told then that one day she would make Nebraska—that dreaded and stultifying nemesis for creativitiy—the jewel in her crown of achievement.

After her marriage and the birth of her daughter, Creigh continued to write—for the *Hastings Daily Tribune* as garden editor, as editor of the *Hastings College Alumni Quarterly,* as a freelance writer of pieces for the *Omaha World-Herald*, and she occasionally returned to teach at Hastings College. In 1958, she assisted her father in writing a history of Hastings College, and in 1962, a history of the old Presbyterian College at Bellevue, Nebraska. In 1973, she wrote the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Hastings: *The First Hundred Years, 1873-1973.*

But it was an experience in 1959 which seems to have galvanized her into purposeful action both as a community booster and as a professional woman. One day in 1959, Creigh, her mother, and a friend went to Omaha to hear Mari Sandoz give a lecture at the University of Omaha. Both Tom and Dorothy Creigh had a Nebraska heritage—Dorothy as a granddaughter of sandhill homesteaders and Tom as the grandson of Governor Furnas' right-hand man. This heritage drew them to Sandoz' books, and together the Creighs read her western history stories aloud. As a high school student, Dorothy Creigh had also had a violent introduction to Sandoz when her father refused to allow her to read *Old Jules.* "In a talk she gave at Hastings College in 1979 about Mari Sandoz, Creigh described that experience. 'I remember how pleased I was when my name finally came up on the reserve list at the city library and I could bring home a copy of *Old Jules* to read. . .. I also remember vividly how, that evening, Father discovered that copy, the scene that ensued, and how Father got in the car and rushed that book right back to the library. No member of his family was going to read that dirty book. Father considered it an attack upon all Swiss, upon all Swiss immigrants, and particularly all Swiss immigrants in the Sand Hills area of Nebraska.' "[14] Because of prolonged interest, Creigh went to hear Sandoz. In Omaha, the Hastings' women took Sandoz to dinner. Creigh was mesmerized and challenged by the most "fascinating, erudite, intellectual, outgoing woman" she had ever met.

Shortly after their first meeting, Mari Sandoz, in the process of writing *Love Song to the Plains,* asked Creigh to send her some information about a professor of music at Hastings College and the collection of instruments and music manuscripts amassed by Otto Renderspacher during the twenties and thirties in Vienna and other European music centers. Creigh eagerly and quickly complied, and Mari Sandoz used her remarks almost *verbatim* in her book. Doubtless flattered at the time, much later Creigh expressed sensitivity at not having her contribution acknowledged publicly.[15]

Mari Sandoz did, however, repay Dorothy Creigh in encouragement. She wrote: "You have the makings of a real writer of significance."[16] And Creigh was appreciative: "I'm so grateful to you for your interest and faith in me—you are the only person who's showed any confidence at all in my ability to write the story [about Alice Yocum] or has treated it as anything more than a whimsy. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart."[17] And again, after a visit in Hastings in 1964 when she stayed at the Creigh guest house, Mari wrote: "—I think *you're* working yourself into trouble, with all those freshman papers and no assistant. . .. That's no way for you to spend your creative years, as you must know. Now you have the ideas, and the buoyancy to put them into books. *Don't* throw these years away."[18]

Mari Sandoz never visited the Creighs again, but she had touched Dorothy indelibly. The correspondence thereafter, while Sandoz was hospitalized during her last illness, was mostly on Dorothy Creigh's side. In the spring of 1965 while Dorothy and Tom and the two older children were on a Hellenic cruise, Creigh wrote a letter to her friend marvelling about the similarities between native American and ancient Greek religions especially with regard to oracular wisdom and purification rituals.[19] That fall, Creigh wrote Sandoz describing the "lovely Nebraska autumn" experiences of the Creighs. Dorothy's typical vivid natural description of the sandhills was further enlivened by the report of a dispute between the heroine-worshipping Creigh daughter, Mary Libbett, and her high school English teacher who had scoffed at Sandoz' claim that anyone could be taught to write.[20] Finally, on December 3, 1965, Creigh wrote her mentor for advice about her Yocum story. This last letter was answered. "Hurrah for the book!" The structure will come. Just write the story, Sandoz coaxed. [21]

Creigh never did write the story, but Mari Sandoz' encouragement would not let her rest. It may be that Sandoz was responsible not only for Creigh's re-found enthusiasm and focus, but also for her concentration as a professional writer on local Nebraska history. For during the years after her meeting with Sandoz, Creigh—already embedded in her Nebraska heritage both in its natural and historical phases—became more and more enchanted with her native state and with its people. Even so, Creigh could not devote her singular attention and energy to writing alone. She could not be diverted from her desire to excel in all her many roles. She led a fund drive to build a new public library and, at about the same time, became involved with a group of community enthusiasts in organizing the Adams County Historical Society which found a home in the new library.

One begins at this time to see the merging and coalescing of Creigh's pleasure in the stories of people, in writing, and in Nebraska local history so that the whole became greater than its parts. The historical society was a project capable of incorporating Creigh's greatest talents and interests, a project worthy of her tremendous energy and drive.

As always, Dorothy Creigh envisioned the possibilities of the Adams County Historical Society complete with the means of accomplishing what she knew could be done. As clearly as she saw the possibilities and defined them, she sought with her habitual energy to implement them. Sometimes she was urged and allowed to lead; sometimes she failed and knew the pain of not achieving everything as soon as she wanted and the way she wanted. When that happened, Creigh occasionally stepped on toes—not out of malice, but in order to get the job done well.[22] Creigh always had to be active—doing, doing. If one were to describe her with one word, that word would be energy. She found three traits intolerable: ignorance—because anyone who wanted could cure that by reading, laziness—her worst fear was that she would be "do-less," and artificial. Dorothy herself had no time to be other than her unvarnished, unmasked self.[23] And she expected no less of others than she did of herself.

The Adams County Historical Society was organized by history buffs "to preserve the records of the past so that present and future generations would know of the heritage of the Plains."[24] The initial functions were largely those of collection and cataloguing, locating historic sites, and reaching out into the community to stimulate interest. In addition, Dorothy wanted the society to be one which would "contribute harmony and cohesiveness to the community as it preserved local history."[25]

In the ten years following its establishment, the Society grew and expanded its objectives. It began to publish a quarterly, then a monthly, newsletter—not of Historical Society activities, but a periodical of substantive local history written to appeal to a wide audience. With her journalistic experience, Creigh was a natural editor. Her myriad interests and wide-ranging curiosity are apparent in the articles which subsequently were reprinted in four volumes of *Tales from the Prairie.* The newsletter was directed at an audience that enjoyed short stories about people—social history about how people lived, what they did and why, what made them tick. To insure that the past would come alive through the stories, Creigh often rewrote the contributions in a "spritely style."[26] This sprightliness and vision were Dorothy Weyer Creigh's forte. It was the quality which she could give that no one else could.

In 1974, the Adams County Historical Society hired a professional director and accepted mill levy funding from the Adams County Board of Supervisors. This seed money enabled the Society to apply to various foundations, corporations, and state and federal funding agencies for matching grants. The Society launched an impressive array of historical projects funded by, among others, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities, the Nebraska Educational Television Council on Higher Education, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the National Historical Publications and Records Committee of the National Archives. The projects ranged from television and movie programs about the Great Plains, women in America, and in Adams County, the Depression, ethnic and Black history to several archival search and cataloguing efforts. By 1974, the Adams County Historical Society had reached maturity, moved into new, more spacious quarters in the Hastings Museum, and had become a national model and prototype of successful local historical societies.

Dorothy Creigh also became a public figure, a national expert by reason of her experience. She also became well-known for her enthusiasm and willingness to write and to speak almost any where and at any time about this exciting and totally engaging adventure in her life. She was invited and enthusiastically agreed to speak and moderate at several seminars and conferences of the American Association of State and Local History, at meetings of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and at the Institute of Museum Services of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. She was elected a member of the Council of the AASLH and became a state advisor for the National Trust of Historic Preservation. By good fortune, Creigh had arrived on the scene of state and local history just as public interest in the area was exploding. Her innate energy and talent insured that she would make a name for herself—"milking the national past time."[27] Creigh was aware that this fortuitous good timing was a factor in her success: "I discovered that local history has no limits. The whole field is burgeoning. Our mobile society makes people try to find their roots and hang onto them. If Alex Haley's book had been written 10 years ago, it wouldn't have been nearly as successful."[28] Even so, few could have equalled Creigh's impact in the field, because few had her drive.

Creigh's first major writing project related to local history was the centennial history of Adams County published by the Adams County-Hastings Centennial Commission. Edited and largely written by Creigh, the book was envisioned and organized to be accurate. Creigh's approach was topical and chronological. Creigh's intent was to give a balanced account of all the years the community had been in existence, not emphasizing the earliest or the most recent period, and representing the whole community "not just the people in the big Victorian houses."[29] She did not wish to commit the common filio-pietistic sin of leaving out the seamier side of a frontier community. *Adams County: A Story of the Great Plains* mentions saloons, gambling, and houses of pleasure. Although Creigh suggested—in her advice to local historical societies about publishing such histories—that as many people as possible be involved in the research and writing, she cautioned that such a book would and should ultimately be the responsibility of only one principal author.[30]

Adams County received national attention and was reviewed favorably in the *Journal of American History* with special commendation for the author's presentation of Hastings, Nebraska in a state, national, and international perspective. The reviewer pointed out for special consideration the material on the Klu Klux Klan and the vivid descriptions of the county's major trials.[31] Creigh herself considered this book to be her best work, calling it "one of the most detailed and scholarly" of the histories of Nebraska communities.[32] And in fitting tribute of her superhuman labor in organizing the mass of data and writing it in only two years, she received the first of her two Awards of Merit from the American Association of State and Local History.

Her second Award of Merit was for a small book based on her experiences in organizing the Adams County Historical Society offering practical common sense suggestions to assist local historical organizations. *A Primer for Local Historical Societies* (Nashville: AASLH, 1976) is probably the book which will be her claim to posterity. It is succinct and clearly written with wit and economy of style. She was asked to write this book to fill a need—to help local societies organize. She was, however, surprised at the greatness of the need and "horrified" to discover that the book was being used as a textbook for graduate students.[33]

Creigh's third major publishing effort was a bicentennial history of Nebraska (*Nebraska*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977) commissioned as one of fifty-one such volumes by the AASLH. Each author was charged "with capturing the essence of his state, with defining and interpreting those qualities in the land and the people which gave the state identity."[34] Most assuredly Dorothy Creigh did that. Reviewers of the book invariably recommended James C. Olson's *History of Nebraska* for a more comprehensive and balanced survey. [35] One reviewer suggested that Creigh's "attempt to delineate dominant cultural values degenerates into encomiums about

Nebraskans as 'self-reliant, physically vigorous, elemental and long-lived.' "[36] On the other hand, a more favorable reviewer chose to see Creigh's identification of the essential elements in the Nebraska character as "conservative, frugal, slow to change, practical, imaginative, emotional about the land, stubborn, friendly, and, in many ways, contradictory."[37] Creigh did not intend to replace Olson's work with her own. Her stated aim was to concentrate on the story of the people. The book, she said, " 'is about the people, not the leaders but the common, ordinary, garden-variety people.' "[38]

Dorothy Creigh was not a historian, although James Olson said he had high regard for her work.[39] The professional historians who were her most vocal detractors are correct. She was not analytical about the past nor especially interpretative. Although she proudly called herself a historian, she was a historian only in the sense of being a preserver of the physical and literary artifacts of the past. She was a freelance writer and journalist, and an enthusiastic teller of tales about the Nebraskans of the past. She collected stories, those little vignettes of human existence that could be as important as the earth-shaking events. She focused on the characters—the people—more than on the general significance of a finite event. " 'People are the most fascinating things on earth,' she said. 'They're interesting if they have interests beyond their own small, limited horizons. I like those who have something to talk about and those with the courage of their convictions.' "[40]

Dorothy Creigh came to history through her love of people. And love of local history and people took her to other interests. She cared about the problems of women and was volatile in reaction to those who did not believe women should do what they could do.[41] In 1974, Governor Exon named her to the Nebraska Board of Education. There she was dogmatic and diligent in obtaining Title IX funds for educational facilities and programs for women. At the time of her death, she was gearing up for a re-election campaign to the State Board of Education because she believed it was her duty to fight to maintain high standards for teachers in the school.[42] There were several books she was still researching and organizing, and she had been commissioned to write a history of Lancaster County for which she was amassing data.

Dorothy Creigh was always doing, doing, doing, and although her fields of activity were wide-ranging, writing was her special concern. One of her most treasured honors was the Mari Sandoz Award of the Nebraska Library Association presented to her in 1981 because "her historical writings, documentary films and lectures continue the tradition of Mari Sandoz in calling attention to the uniqueness of the Great Plains."[43] Sandoz was Dorothy Creigh's idol and paragon. Creigh measured her achievements—14 books and over 200 articles—against Sandoz' dossier of 19 books and fifty magazine articles. And Dorothy came to maturity in her own assessment when she realized that she was a better, clearer writer than Sandoz although she conceded that she could not match Sandoz' color or her mastery of fiction techniques.[44]

Sandoz believed that writing demanded total attention; stubbornly, Creigh would not relinquish or diminish any of her roles. She followed her own bent when she struggled to bloom as historian, writer, editor, lecturer, teacher, mother, wife, and friend in a comfortable middle class family environment in Hastings, Nebraska.

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10. Tom Creigh Interview.

11. Creigh Correspondence.

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16. Sandoz Correspondence, November 27, 1961.

17. Sandoz Correspondence, January 13, 1962.

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19. Sandoz Correspondence, April 17, 1965.

20. Sandoz Correspondence, October 16, 1965, October 30, 1965.

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LETA STETTER HOLLINGWORTH

Photograph courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society

LETA SETTER HOLLINGWORTH
Psychologist, Educator, Feminist

by Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr.

Dr. Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. is Associate Professor of Psychology at Texas A&M University. After earning his Ph.D. degree from Texas Christian University in 1970, he joined the faculty at Nebraska Wesleyan University where he taught for eight years. The next two years were spent in Washington, D.C. where Dr. Benjamin was Educational Affairs Officer for the American Psychological Association. Back in an academic setting once again, he divides his research time between studies of human sleep and the history of American psychology. He is a past President of the American Psychological Association's Division on the History of Psychology. Some of his published research has pointed to the unusual role Nebraska played in the production of psychologists who have made significant contributions to that discipline.

Commenting on her origins in Nebraska, Leta Stetter Hollingworth wrote, "I shall never cease to rejoice that I was born on the limitless prairies. To grow up on their expanse means to see in long stretches, to scorn boundaries, to go free all one's life."[1] That statement is descriptive not only of her life, but also of the course of her research, writing, and teaching directed at boundaries that she saw as artificial. Although her career spanned only 26 years, her accomplishments were many, earning her a number of professional honors and an international reputation in psychology and education. At a memorial conference held for her in 1940, the president of the American Psychological Association commented, "In her death psychology has lost one who might well be called America's most distinguished woman psychologist."[2]

While some biographical material and an overview of Hollingworth's career will be provided in this essay, the focus will be on her work in two areas: the dogmas that asserted the biological inferiority of women and the education of intellectually gifted children. The first of those areas will be treated in some detail as an extended case history of her research style.

Leta Hollingworth was born Leta Anna Stetter on May 25, 1886, on her maternal grandparents' farm near the pioneer community of Chadron, Nebraska. Her parents were Margaret Elinor Danley and John G. Stetter, whose marriage in July of 1885 was the first recorded marriage in the newly organized Dawes County.

During the first year of Leta Stetter's life, her mother kept a diary of her infant's development, a diary that would document the precocious talents that her child possessed.[3] Leta's mother died when she was three, and the task of raising her passed on to her maternal grandparents. Leta Stetter received her early formal education in a one-room log schoolhouse, an education she later described as "excellent in every respect." She wrote that classes were small and that the students had "all nature for a laboratory, and individualized instruction."[4]

At age 10 Leta Stetter moved with her grandparents to Chadron, but two years later she joined her father in Valentine. In 1902, at the age of 15, she was graduated from Valentine High School, the smallest girl in a class of eight students. There she had demonstrated her creative writing skills and in turn had been encouraged to further her development in college.[5]

As a first-year student at the University of Nebraska in 1902, Leta Stetter pursued her interests in literature and writing, taking numerous courses in those areas. In addition she was active as literary editor of the *Daily Nebraskan* (the student newspaper). In her senior year, she was associate editor of the *Sombrero* (the undergraduate annual of the University), assistant editor of the *Senior Book*, and class poet for the class of 1906.

Graduating at the age of 19 with Phi Beta Kappa honors, Leta Stetter hoped to pursue a career in writing. She was especially interested in the short story as a literary form, one that she believed was beginning to come of age. Her college instructors, like those of her younger days, reinforced her literary interests and encouraged her desires to succeed as a writer. In responding to one of those professors only a few months after her graduation, she wrote:

> *Do you really think that I could "write"? Somehow I always feel the quotation marks around that word. There is an incipiency in the term which grows out of associating it with the inefficient, —aspiring youths, ungrammatical maidens, local "poets," and English Club members; all those who feel spasmodic upswellings of emotion, and imagine that there is a reason why these experiences should be chronicled on paper.*
>
> *But what things are required of one who will really "write"? The power to see far and farther, general knowledge, acquaintance with all that has gone before, mechanical means (perfect mastery of his language), the power to put his thoughts uniquely and artistically, and the power to make people love him. He must catch the vision of his own age, further-*

> *more, and must produce that for which there is demand. And if he have all these requisites and his work be not in some way unique and peculiarly helpful and serviceful, it is a failure.*
>
> *The problem of "demand" for written work need trouble one but little. If a thing is worthy it will find its place. . .. If one's efforts find no place in the "scheme of things," let him rest calm in assurance that they were in some way wanting.*
>
> *I am possessed of a kind of curiosity to discover where (my own) "boundaries" are placed. . . Someday perhaps I shall tell the old world what it looks like to me, —after I get through taking a look. Then, perhaps I never shall. Perhaps when I have acquired all those things which I have yet to learn, I shall feel that my service could not be worth while, or more probably as editors or publishers will feel so. Yet almost always I feel that it would be the most exhilarating fun in the world to "write".*[6]

She was 20 years old when she wrote those lines. Perhaps they are thoughts common to many would-be writers, that is, doubts about the base of experience, doubts about the insight required to draw from that experience, and most importantly, doubts of the ultimate worth of what one has to say. That passage from one of her letters is cited here not only to illustrate her intense desire to write but also to show the depth of understanding she possessed at such an early age. Once again she makes reference to boundaries that need to be surveyed.

Encouraged by her teachers and brimming with enthusiasm, she sought to sell several of her short stories but met with no success. In order to earn a living she accepted an offer at DeWitt, Nebraska, to serve as assistant principal and teacher in the school there. Her contract was not unusual for that time. It indicated payment in "the sum of $60 per month for said services, and to keep the schoolhouse in good repair, to provide the necessary fuel and supplies, and to furnish janitor work."[7] Such jobs were only to support her needs until such time as her literary talents bore fruit.

After a year at DeWitt and a subsequent year at the high school in McCook, Nebraska, Leta Stetter left Nebraska to marry her former college classmate, Harry Levi Hollingworth, in New York City on December 31, 1908. Her husband-to-be was a graduate assistant to the eminent psychologist James McKeen Cattell at Columbia University. She sought a teaching position, only to discover that married women were not hired to teach in the schools of New York. She turned her energies to writing and again found herself thwarted when her stories were not accepted by publishers. Concerning these years, Harry Hollingworth wrote:

> *During the earlier years of married life Leta Stetter Hollingworth's time and energy were chiefly consumed by housework, cooking, dress-making, mending, washing, ironing, making her own hats and suits and endless other domestic duties in the frugal apartment home. Almost always*

> *she effectually stifled her own eager longing for intellectual activity like that of her husband. Day after day, and many long evenings, she led her solitary life in the meagerly furnished quarters, while he was away at regular duties or seizing on this and that opportunity to earn a few dollars on the side, by lectures, tutoring and assorted odd jobs not usually included in the career of a scholar.*
>
> *"Staying at home eating a lone pork chop" was the way she sometimes facetiously described her experience in these days. There were occasional periods of discouragement. . .. These slips from her customary determined and courageous procedure she could hardly explain then, even to herself. Later she was able to make it clear that it was because she could hardly bear, with her own good mind and professional training and experience, not to be able to contribute to the joint welfare more than the simple manual activities that occupied her.*[8]

The frustration she felt, however, laid the groundwork for a new career. Leta Hollingworth, intellectually gifted and with unbounded energy and ambition, was forced into a woman's traditional role for which she had no desire. Since their marriage, the Hollingworths had attempted to save money for the tuition for Leta Hollingworth's graduate education. Continued illnesses in her family in Nebraska depleted their reserves. As a result, Harry Hollingworth began to take additional jobs outside his university position to increase their income. These jobs were in the area of applied psychology—consulting with people in the business world, mostly about advertising—an activity he found distasteful, yet one which paid well and one which would allow his wife the educational opportunities they both deserved.[9]

Three years after their marriage, Leta Hollingworth began graduate work in educational psychology, and earned her M.A. degree in 1913 from Columbia University. It was at this time that she decided to look critically at the status of women. As a woman who had been rebuffed in a "man's world," she wanted to know why women were regarded as relatively inferior to men. What were the facts that supported this position? Were women inherently inferior, restricted because of their biology, or were they unwarranted victims of a male-dominated social order? She began by reading everything she could locate on the subject of sex differences. Claims for the inferiority of women were in many published works, including those of the most famous psychologists of the early 20th century—James McKeen Cattel, G. Stanley Hall, and Edward L. Thorndike. Yet in her reading, Leta Hollingworth found no scientific data which were supportive of these claims. Typical assertions were:

> *Women are actually inferior in their abilities to men and should be treated accordingly.*
>
> *Women have just as "good" abilities as men, but these talents lie all in the direction of sympathy, tenderness, nursing, child care, decoration, and the*

like.

> *Women are primarily and biologically chiefly sex objects, and their primary role is and ought to be based on their reproductive function. At most they should merely serve as interesting companions to men.*
>
> *Women, by virtue of the rhythm of their menstrual functions, experience regularly recurring interferences with the use of all their abilities, and must be considered for a considerable part of each lunar period as invalids, or semi-invalids.*
>
> *Women as a species are less variable among themselves than are men; all women are pretty much alike but men range enormously in their talents and defects. This was used to explain at the same time the greater frequency of men in the lists of distinguished people, and also their greater frequency in institutions for the feeble-minded.*[10]

The last of these assertions held the most interest for Leta Hollingworth, in part because it was an assertion that could be put to a scientific test. This assertion was commonly known as the "variability hypothesis," and its history was dubious to say the least. In the early part of the 19th century, the anatomist, Johann Meckel, argued that the human female was considerably more variable than the male and "since man is the superior animal" then variation must be a sign of inferiority.[11] A half-century later, Charles Darwin emphasized the importance of variation as the principal means through which progress in the species could be obtained. Following the publication of Darwin's ideas, "the greater variability of the human male began to be affirmed everywhere in men's written opinions."[12]

The "fact" of greater male variability seemed obvious at both ends of the continuum. There were more males in institutions for the "feeble-minded" than females. At the other extreme Edward Thorndike pointed to:

> *the patent fact that in the great achievements of the world in science, art, invention, and management, women have been far excelled by men. . .. In particular, if men differ in intelligence and energy by wider degrees than do women, eminence in and leadership of the world's affairs of whatever sort will inevitably belong oftener to men. They will oftener deserve it.*[13]

Rheta Childe Dorr, a Nebraskan and nationally famous journalist and feminist, writing in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1915, described the hypothesis as follows:

> *Men, it is held, have a greater range of intellect; they climb higher and sink lower than women. They give the world more geniuses, likewise more idiots. They are capable of greater morality, and also of greater immorality. Most of the prophets and teachers and also most criminals have been men. Men show more variability even in their anatomical structure than women, who persistently tend to averages, both mental and physical. Men then will forever outstrip women, who, as*

> *a sex, are capable of only average achievements.*[14]

Acceptance of the validity of the variability hypothesis led to a logical extension in the field of education as noted by psychologist Stephanie Shields:

> *If women were less likely to have above-average ability, it would not be reasonable to expect achievement from them. Their education should, therefore, be geared to preparing them for the activities in which they were most likely to engage.*[15]

In other words, educational programs should stress domestic skills, including talents such as child care and decoration. Indeed, G. Stanley Hall, president of Clark University, and E.L. Thorndike of Columbia University had proposed specialized curricula for women.

The variability hypothesis flourished in the early 1900s principally on what Hollingworth referred to as "armchair dogma." It could be found in the literature of psychology, education, medicine, and sociology. The only major critic was British psychologist Karl Pearson who had published a study in 1897 in which he reported no differences in variability of males when compared to females. Until the work of Leta Hollingworth, that study was the only scientific investigation of the variability hypothesis which had been published.

In 1913, a temporary position opened at the Clearing-House for Mental Defectives in New York City for someone to aid in its mental testing program. Hollingworth took the job, and her work proved so effective that her position with the agency was made permanent. This position was important to her for a number of reasons, perhaps the most important being that it gave her a chance to collect data on one aspect of the variability hypothesis. It frequently had been noted that the proportion of men to women in institutions for the mentally defective was much greater than should be expected, given the ratio of males to females in the general population. Hollingworth examined 1,000 cases diagnosed in the Clearing-House during 1912 and 1913. In absolute terms, males did exceed females, 568 to 432. However, what she discovered was a most interesting bias in those data. For individuals over 16 years of age at the time of admission, 78 were males while 159 were females. And for individuals over 30 years of age upon admission, nine were males and 28 were females.[16] Concerning those data she wrote:

> *At present it suffices to point out that the fact that females escape the Clearing-House till beyond the age of thirty years three times as frequently as males, fits very well with the fact that more males than females are brought to the Clearing-House, on the whole. The boy who cannot compete mentally is found out, becomes at an early age an object of concern to relatives, is brought to the Clearing-House, and directed toward an institution. The girl who cannot compete mentally is not so often recognized as definitely defective, since it is not unnatural for her to drop into the isolation of the home, where she can "take care of" small children,*

> *peel potatoes, scrub, etc. . . . Thus they survive outside of institutions.*[17]

In a later study whose results supported her research at the Clearing-House, she wrote, "A girl must be relatively more stupid than a boy in order to be presented for examination and she must be still more stupid, comparatively, to be actually segregated as unfit for social and economic participation."[18]

In 1914, Hollingworth published a major review article in which she critiqued a number of papers which had dealt with the variability hypothesis.[19] Her closing remarks in that paper provided an outline of her future research in that area:

> *Briefly our thesis may be summed up thus:*
>
> *1. The greater variability of males in anatomical traits is not established, but is debated by authorities of perhaps equal competence.*
>
> *2. But even if it were established, it would only suggest, not prove, that men are more variable in mental traits also. The empirical data at present available on this point are inadequate and contradictory, and if they point either way, actually indicate greater female variability.*
>
> *3. But even if it were established that there actually is greater male variability in mental traits, it would only suggest, not prove, that there is greater inherent variability. For (a) the opportunity and exercise of the sexes has been dissimilar and unequal; (b) intellectual variability has had survival value for men, but for women it has had little or none—this by virtue of the different parts played by the sexes in the perpetuation of the species.*
>
> *4. It must be remembered that variability in an of itself does not have social significance unless it is known in what the variability consists. . . .*
>
> *5. It is undesirable to seek for the cause of sex differences in eminence in ultimate and obscure affective and intellectual differences until we have exhausted as a cause the known, obvious, and inescapable fact that women bear and rear the children, and that this has had as an inevitable sequel the occupation of housekeeping, a field where eminence is not possible.*

The first of these points was attacked in an article published in 1914.[20] The study was conceived to answer the question, "Are male human beings inherently more variable in anatomical traits than female human beings?" Hollingworth decided to use infants rather than children or adults, since they would be free of the differences in environmental conditions which could account for variability differences in adults. Her reasoning on variability as it then existed she explained as follows:

> *The lives of men and women are lived under conditions so different as to constitute practically different environments. . . . We should expect to find adult males more variable than adult females, because the males are free to follow a great*

> *variety of trades, professions and industries, while women have been confined to the single occupation of housekeeping, because of the part they play in the perpetuation of the species. Thus variability has had comparatively little survival value for women. A woman of natural herculean strength does not wash dishes, cook meals, or rear children much more successfully than a woman of ordinary muscle. But a man of natural herculean strength is free to abandon carpentry or agriculture and become a prize-fighter or a blacksmith, thus exercising and enhancing his native equipment.*[21]

Hollingworth began to collect her data from the files of the New York infirmary for Women and Children. For every infant born in the hospital, ten anatomical measurements were routinely obtained, including weight, length, circumference of shoulders, and seven cranial measurements. She analyzed these data for 1,000 consecutive females and 1,000 consecutive males. In brief, she found that male infants were slightly larger than female infants on all anatomical variables in her study. However, there were *no* differences in variability between the sexes. For the first time a serious crack had appeared in the armor of the variability hypothesis.

Her next reasearch efforts centered on the female menstrual cycle, that hormonal rhythmicity that rendered women as "invalids or semi-invalids." The study she planned was to be her doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, and it was to be supervised by Professor E.L. Thorndike, a great proponent of the variability hypothesis. Her subjects were 23 females and two males (as controls) and she tested them over a period of three months in tasks that involved perceptual, motor, and mental abilities. She found that there were no differences in performance associated with any phase of the menstrual cycle.[22]

Dr. Hollingworth received her Ph.D. degree in 1916. At that point she was author of one book and nine scientific papers, all concerned with the psychology of women. In that same year she authored a significant paper in which she elucidated the social controls exerted on women for the bearing and rearing of children.[23] She was reacting to generally held opinions such as "only abnormal women want no babies," and "normally a woman lives through her children; a man lives through his work." Medicine, public opinion, law, education, and art were all shown to reflect the consensus attitude of the value of women in the "natural" role of maternity. She noted that these social mechanisms confounded the child bearing process and thus distorted the true picture of maternity:

> *It seems very clear that "the social guardians" have not really believed that maternal instinct is alone a sufficient guaranty of population. They have made use of all possible social devices to insure not only childbearing, but child-rearing. Belief, law, public opinion, illusion, education, art. . .have all been used to re-enforce maternal instinct. We shall never know just how much maternal instinct alone will do for population until all the forces*

> *and influences exemplified above have become inoperative. As soon as women become fully conscious of the fact that they have been and are controlled by these devices the latter will become usless, and we shall get a truer measure of maternal feeling.*[24]

Leta Hollingworth's actual research on the psychology of women ended shortly after she received her doctoral degree, although she continued to publish articles on the subject for a number of years. For example, she wrote on the vocational aptitudes of women, calling for an end to the myths regarding the vocational potential of women.[25] When the council of Phi Beta Kappa decided to limit eligibility of women in that society, Leta Hollingworth was very quick to call attention to the implications of that policy in print.[26] In a collaborative effort with anthropologist Robert Lowie, she examined the notion of innate female inferiority from a number of data sources including anatomical, physiological, and cross-cultural studies.[27] Their summary of the literature pointed to the lack of evidence for any inherent female inferiority, and the abundance of folklore, superstition, and social mores which served as active restraints on women.

Dr. Hollingworth's final published contribution to the psychology of women appeared in 1927.[28] In this work, she described an evolutionary theory of the development of sex roles and the importance of the discovery of paternity of the eventual beginning of change in those roles.

> *The woman question is and always has been simply this: How to reproduce the species and at the same time to win satisfaction of the human appetites for food, security, self-assertion, mastery, adventure, play, and so forth. Man satisfies these cravings by competitive attack, both physical and mental upon the environment. As compared with man, woman has always been in a cage, with those satisfactions outside. The cage has been her cumbersome reproductive system.*[29]

Why did Leta Hollingworth abandon her writing in the psychology of women? Shields has suggested a number of potential answers to that question, including: (1) isolation in the academic community as well as the larger culture of New York City, that may have caused her to underestimate the status of women in other settings, and (2) the achievement of enfranchisement in 1920. That is, she may have felt the battles were won and it was now possible to move on to other interests that she held.[30] Her husband noted in his biography of his wife that, "the world never allowed Leta S. Hollingworth to forget that she was a woman" and that her life goals included publication of her account of the "long and torturous path of Mrs. Pilgrim's progress."[31] Yet, that was a project she would never complete.

An active member of the Woman's Suffrage Party and a frequent marcher in suffrage parades, her work on the psychology of women was clearly important to the growth of the women's movement in the early part of this century. Indeed, her work established her as the "scientific pillar" of the women's movement in her day. In recent years, the debt to her research and writing has been acknowledged in a number of publications reflecting the women's movement of the 1970's.[32]

There were boundaries to be questioned besides those that hindered equity for women, and after receiving her doctoral degree, her efforts turned to these other topics. From 1916 until her death in 1939, Leta Hollingworth wrote eight books and seventy-four articles, only four of which would concern the psychology of women.

When Professor Naomi Norsworthy died in 1916, Leta Hollingworth was offered her position at Teachers College of Columbia University. Continuing a research interest that had actually begun several years earlier with her appointment at the Clearing-House for Mental Defectives, Dr. Hollingworth published several books and a number of articles dealing with the "psychology of subnormal children" and the effects of various mental defects in relation to pedagogical strategies.

In working with these "mentally defective" children, she soon realized that many of them were of normal intelligence but suffered from emotional and attitudinal problems due to adjustment difficulties, especially during the adolescent years. This discovery led to her investigations in adolescent behavior and her publication in 1928 of *The Psychology of the Adolescent*. That text would be considered a standard in the field for the next two decades. Further, she discovered that intellectually superior children also could be problem children. As special programs began to be initiated in the public schools for children of lower intelligence, she began to ask what was being done for children of exceptional intellectual potential. She found that most psychologists and educators of that day were of the opinion that "the bright can take care of themselves."[33] This interest in gifted education would occupy the remainder of her life and would account for the bulk of her publications: a total of 45 articles and two books on the subject of intellectually gifted children.

It was in this field that she would establish her reputation on an international basis. In the 1920s, there were less than a half-dozen individuals doing research on gifted children and gifted education. Her research was incredibly comprehensive and can only be briefly summarized here. It included studies on size and strength of gifted children, on sibling relations, on musical sensitivity, on play behavior, and on personality characteristics. She worked on assessment tools for early identification of the intellectually gifted, and inevitably her work led her to the development of educational methods for those children.

In the 1920s, Hollingworth developed an arrangement with certain officials in the New York City schools whereby gifted children could be selected and then segregated for special educational opportunities. Her book, *Gifted Children* (1926), described some of this work, and like her book on adolescence, this text would be the standard reference work in schools of education for years to come.

By 1934, these programs had attracted sufficient public interest and support to establish a special "experimental" school for a select portion of gifted children in New York City. The Speyer School, or P.S. 500 as it was also known, opened its doors in February of 1936 with Leta Hollingworth in charge of research programs in the school. This experimental effort, conducted in cooperation with Columbia University, was to be a five-year project. However, her death would prevent her from seeing the project to its finish.[34]

During her lifetime, Leta Hollingworth received a number of formal honors, including biographical sketches in *American Men of Science*, *Who's Who in Literature*, and *Who's Who in the East*. However, the honor she cherished the most was first revealed to her by her life-long friend Louise Pound, then on the faculty at the University of Nebraska. Professor Pound told her that she should "accept no engagements for the [1938] Commencement period. . .so as to be free to come to Lincoln, Nebraska."[35] In June of that year, she was awarded an honorary doctorate of laws degree by the University of Nebraska. Expressing her interest in gifted and talented people, she addressed a University alumni banquet on the subject of Nebraska's contribution to the artistic and intellectual leadership of the nation.[36] She reported that in a national study "Nebraska was found to rank *third* among the states in the production of American notables of the nineteen-twenties, being bettered by Massachusetts and Connecticut only."[37]

While in Lincoln, Dr. Hollingworth persuaded her husband to participate in what seemed to him an untimely task. He recalled that they went together:

> *. . .to Wyuka Cemetery, where we purchased for ourselves a tiny plot of ground on the eastern slope of a grassy mound. L.S.H., in a mood that was strangely foreign to her up to that time, had become seriously concerned over the provision for our final resting place, and she expressed a desire to make such an arrangement now. The prescient nature of the act was then, by me at least, wholly unsuspected, and I little dreamed that in another eighteen months I would be bringing her there to rest forever in the spot she had chosen.*[38]

Leta Hollingworth was 53 years old when abdominal cancer terminated her life. Her accomplishments belie the fact that she was professionally active for less than half of that abbreviated life span. And in those years, she would make contributions whose effects would be felt for decades after her death. The boundaries that she battled in the search for the equality of opportunity for women and education for the gifted are still boundaries today. However, they are far less formidable in contemporary society, a fact that is in some measure due to an eminent Nebraskan, Leta S. Hollingworth.

In a "home-coming letter" to the *Nebraska State Journal* two years prior to her death Dr. Hollingworth wrote:

> *One more thing I would say. Sometime I shall come back to*

> *Nebraska for good. I was born there. I was reared there. I was educated there. I shall take the last long sleep there. The East is too alien for purposes of eternal sleep.*[39]

NOTES

1. H.L. Hollingworth, *Leta Stetter Hollingworth: A biography.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1943, p. 52.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-37.

4. L.S. Hollingworth, *Prairie Years.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1940.

5. Psychologist Lewis Terman (responsible for the development of the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test) remarked that one of the poems Leta wrote at age 14 "compares favorably with the best juvenilia this reviewer has seen." Terman, Review of *Leta Stetter Hollingworth: A Biography. Journal of Applied Psychology,* August 1944, pp. 357-359.

6. H.L. Hollingworth, p. 72.

7. H.L. Hollingworth, p. 77.

8. H.L. Hollingworth, pp. 98-99.

9. L.T. Benjamin, "Harry Levi Hollingworth: Reluctant Pioneer in Applied Psychology." A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, August, 1975.

10. H.L. Hollingworth, p. 114.

11. L.S. Hollingworth, "Comparative variability of the sexes" in *Public Addresses.* Lancaster, PA: Science Press Company, 1940, p.11.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

13. E.L. Thorndike, *Educational Psychology,* 1910, *35.* As cited in L.S. Hollingworth, "Variability as related to sex differences in achievement." *American Journal of Sociology,* 1914, *19* pp. 510-530.

14. R.C. Door, "Is woman biologically barred from success?" *New York Times Magazine,* September 19, 1915, pp. 15-16.

15. S.A. Shields, "Ms. Pilgrim's Progress, the contributions of Leta Stetter Hollingworth to the psychology of women." *American Psychologist,* 1975, *30,* pp. 852-857.

16. L.S. Hollingworth, "The frequency of amentia as related to sex." *Medical Record,* 1913, *84,* pp. 753-756.

17. L.S. Hollingworth, Variability as related to sex differences in achievement, pp. 510-530.

18. L.S. Hollingworth, "Differential action upon the sexes of forces which tend to segregate the feeble-minded." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* 1922, *17,* pp. 35-37.

19. L.S. Hollingworth, "Variability as related to sex differences in achievement," pp. 528-529.

20. H. Montague & L.S. Hollingworth, "The comparative variability of the sexes at birth." *American Journal of Sociology,* 1914, *20,* 335-370.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 343.

22. L.S. Hollingworth, "Functional periodicity: An experimental study of the mental and motor abilities of women during menstruation." Teachers College Columbia University, 1914.

University, 1914.

23. L.S. Hollingworth, "Social devices for impelling women to bear and rear children." *American Journal of Sociology,* 1916, *22,* pp. 19-29.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

25. L.S. Hollingworth, "The vocational aptitudes of women." In H.L. Hollingworth's *Vocational Psychology*. New York: Appleton, 1916, pp. 222-244.

26. L.S. Hollingworth, "Phi Beta Kappa and women students." *School* "Science and feminism." *Scientific*

27. R.H. Lowie & L.S. Hollingworth, Science and feminism. *Scientific Monthly*, September, 1916, pp. 277-284.

28. L.S. Hollingworth, "The new woman in the making." *Current History*, 1927, *27*, pp. 15-20.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

30. Shields, p. 856.

31. H.L. Hollingworth, p. 119.

32. For example, Shields (1975); L.T. Benjamin, "The pioneering work of Leta Hollingworth in the psychology of women." *Nebraska History*, 1975, *56*, pp. 493-505; F.L. Denmark, et al. (Eds.) *Women: A PDI Reference Work*. New York: Psychological Dimensions, 1979 (reference work on psychology of women dedicated to the memory of Leta Hollingworth.)

33. H.L. Hollingworth, p. 103.

34. H.L. Hollingworth, pp. 160-168; A.I. Gates, "Leta S. Hollingworth: Obituary." *Science*, 1940, *91*, pp.9-11.

35. H.L. Hollingworth, p. 169.

36. L.S. Hollingworth, "The participation of Nebraska in the intellectual and artistic leadership of the nation." *University of Nebraska Special Bulletin*, June 6, 1938.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

38. From the second volume of an unpublished autobiography entitled "Years at Columbia" by H.L. Hollingworth. Copies are located in the Nebraska State Historical Society Archives in Lincoln and in the Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron, Akron, Ohio. The first volume is entitled "Born in Nebraska."

39. H.L. Hollingworth, p. 16.

BERNICE SLOTE

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VIRGINIA FAULKNER

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VIRGINIA FAULKER

Two Willa Cather Scholars

by Robert E. Knoll

Dr. Robert E. Knoll was born in Nebraska and graduated from the University of Nebraska. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Minnesota. In addition to books about Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe, Dr. Knoll has written and edited books about writers of this region. He has taught at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 1950, where he is now George Holmes Professor of English.

Before Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulker joined forces in Willa Cather scholarship, both had enjoyed long and distinguished careers. Both came to Cather scholarship rather late, and the quality of their work reflects their maturity. Their separate careers were, curiously, complementary. Professor Slote was educated in Nebraska, taught in Nebraska, lived only in Nebraska, and won fame from Nebraska; Miss Faulkner, though born in Nebraska, made her way in Washington, D.C., in New York City, and in California. She also lived in Italy and England, was sought out by the international set—and only then returned to Nebraska to become editor of the Univeristy of Nebraska Press, where she remained for twenty-five years. For both of them, all paths led home and high eminence there.

Their work was also complementary. Virginia Faulkner, as a publisher, saw to it that all of Cather's early, fugitive pieces were brought into print in handsome, scholarly style. In addition, because she was at the Press, Nebraska became the center for Cather scholarship. She saw to it that books were commissioned, editions prepared, studies finished, and she saw to it that all of them met her high standards of excellence. She was a formidable editor, from whom even the most experienced writers could, and did, learn. Because of her, no Cather scholarship from Nebraska will ever have to be done again: these are the definitive books.

As Virginia Faulkner was a publisher, Bernice Slote was a scholar-critic. She saw Willa Cather within an intellectual context; she placed Cather in world literature, identifying her connections with Homer and Shakespeare, Virgil and Flaubert, Ovid, and Whitman. Though Bernice Slote was a Nebraskan by birth and choice, she saw Willa Cather as a woman of the world. Few writers have been so devotedly served as Willa Cather has been by Bernice Slote's essays. Slote's research discoveries, and her reviews of scholarship are models, even as Virginia Faulkner's editions, bibliographies, and collections are models. Willa Cather is very fortunate to have had such respectful study.

Bernice Slote

Slote and Faulkner did not come to this labor of love early on; both brought the wisdom of years to their tasks. Professor Slote had really had two careers before she began her career of studying and writing about Cather. First, foremost, and always, she was a teacher. She prided herself on her teaching, devoted her energies to it, gave her heart to it—and she got its rewards: respect from her colleagues, love from her students, university prizes and national recognition. When she graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan University in 1933, she became the English teacher at Ord High School in the Nebraska Sandhills. Though an expert pianist, she had rejected music as a profession because she had found most satisfaction with books. In the Thirties she was glad to have this responsible job. "Believe me, it was hard in those days," she told an interviewer many years later. "It was the decade of difficulties, where nothing was everywhere." In Ord she played the piano for Sunday School and church, trailed the cheering squads at the basketball games, taught gym to the high school girls, and talked respectfully to the school board. After several years, she moved, as teachers in the public schools did in those days, from Ord to Nebraska City and to another good job, teaching English.

After she had taken her master's degree in English at the University of Nebraska with Professor L.C. Wimberly (1943), she went on to the Norfolk Junior college. There she was, in effect, a dean—in all but name and pay. She was happy at Norfolk—she was happy wherever she was, for that was her nature—but she was overworked, and so in 1947 she quit. Asked by Wimberly to come to the University of Nebraska to teach, she accepted, and there she remained for the rest of her career. More than anybody on the staff, she knew about Nebraska high schools, Nebraska towns, Nebraska colleges. She understood the problems and rewards of public school teaching as nobody in the department. She had been a triumphant high school and junior college teacher. Now she was ready for the University.

When Slote came to the University in 1947, she taught writing at first. She was singularly equipped to do that. In the first place, she could herself write with great distinction, even as a young woman. Her sentences had style and her paragraphs had pith, and she was witty. During the summers, after she had taken her M.A., she went to the University of Michigan, where she studied both literature and composition—and she took to writing poetry. Although her distinguished teachers at Michigan urged her to stay on for a Ph.D., she decided she did not want to. She did not want a Ph.D. While she was at Michigan, she won two coveted Hopwood Awards for creative writing as well as the unqualified admiration of Professor Louis T. Bredvolt, one of the world's great 18th century scholars, who asked her to teach one of his courses; and the respect of Professor Clarence Thorpe, one of the world's celebrated scholars of Romanticism, who urged her to publish her critical essays. Already she had begun to publish poetry. Her first poem appreared in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Shortly thereafter her poems appeared in some of the most distinguished journals in the country. Her Michigan advisors—chiefly Professor Cowden—urged her to collect them into a volume, but she did not get around to doing so. Bernice Slote has never been one to put herself forward, even when her career would have profited from it. She put her first energies into teaching. With what was left over, she wrote. She expended no energies playing academic politics. When she began teaching classes at the University, she was ready: she could write, she had a fund of learning, and she had proved herself in first class competition. She was very popular with the students, and she deserved to be. Teaching was her first career.

Her commitment to teaching was demonstrated in another way. She took to publishing textbooks. The first of these, *The Dimensions of Poetry* (1962 with James E. Miller, Jr.) was a labor of love, containing as it did the fruits of what she had learned in many classrooms teaching poetry and writing. It received high praise, and sold very well. Next she brought out *The Dimensions of the Short Story* (1964 also with Miller) and that volume was so successful over the years, that a second edition was called for at last (1980). In these years she took an active part in teachers' organizations, serving on various commissions for the National Council of Teachers of English and the Modern Language Association. She not only taught successfully; she helped others teach well. Through the Forties and Fifties, Professor Slote had a notable career as a teacher in Nebraska; and if the whole world did not beat a path to her door, those in the world who cared about teaching knew she was there, doing her job, attending to business, fulfilling her professional aims. She was the very model of the scholar-teacher.

Urged by her chairman and other of her colleagues, including Professor Wright, she took to writing literary criticism, more for the fun than out of any professional ambition; and shortly she produced her first critical volume, *Keats and the Dramatic Principle* (1958). It won the Explicator Award for the best work of literary analysis of 1958, a major prize. Next she wrote *Start with the Sun* (1960) with James E. Miller, Jr. and Karl Shapiro—she edited her colleagues' essays and shaped the miscellany into a whole—and won the Chapbook Award from the Poetry Society of America. The reviewers said that Bernice Slote's essays were the most memorable in that volume; at that time she was the least well-known of the three. Bernice Slote not only taught writing, she practiced it; and she not only asked for excellence from her students, she demonstrated it. From her home territory, she held her own on the national scene, bringing the prizes home. She was modest, even ironical, about her growing success. If her first career was teaching, her second career was in literary criticism.

But a third, new career (in addition to those of teaching and writing) opened up for her in the Sixties and Seventies. Following suggestions by Virginia Faulkner, she next turned her attention to Willa Cather, and in Cather scholarship she earned an even greater name for herself. First, she published an edition of Cather's first book, the poems, *April Twilight* (1903) (1962). Since Slote was a poet and a Nebraskan, she was singularly able to understand the Cather poems that lay before her; and her introduction marked the beginning of a new area in Cather criticism. It was noted everywhere, and the edition was reissued (1968) as the first of an ambitious project to reprint all of Cather's work then out of print and much that until that time had been unidentified as by Cather. Next she edited *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements, 1893-1896* (1966) with two brilliant essays; and then followed a volume of critical essays by a number of hands, *The Art of Willa Cather* (with Virginia Faulkner) (1973); an edition of early, uncollected stories, *Uncle Valentine and Other Stories, Willa Cather's Uncollected Short Fiction 1915-1925* (1973), and an edition of Cather's first novel, *Alexander's Bridge* (1977). When Jackson Bryer needed somebody to write the comprehensive bibliographical essay on Willa Cather for his volume on *Fifteen Modern American Authors* (1969, 1971) he naturally turned to Bernice Slote, whose essay is definitive.

In 1977, the National Endowment for the Humanities gave her a Senior Fellowship to work on a critical biography of Willa Cather. She was invited by Radcliffe College to spend the year in their libraries. Bernice Slote found herself at the top of her profession: by quietly working at home, tending her own garden and managing her own neighborhood, she had become a national figure. When her University gave her the Research Prize (1979), it only recognized what was understood everywhere: she was one of that small band of scholars who set the standards. By the time she retired, she had been awarded two honorary doctorates. She had earned them.

These two decades were very busy years, for in addition to her teaching and her textbooks, her Cather scholarship and her writing, she was also editor of the *Prairie Schooner*. In that editorship, which she held from 1963 until she retired in 1980, she made use of all her gifts. Her editing was extended teaching. Writers—some young and inexperienced, some established but now trying out new ways—sent her their papers as to a teacher, and following Professor Wimberly's distinguished model, she helped them shape up what they sent, teaching them how to write better. Not all the hundreds of manuscripts that came to her desk got equal attention because not all could profit from scrupulous criticism; but many got the kind of help that they could not get from other, larger, professional journals. As editor, she was now teaching a wider class, made up of people she sometimes had met but more often had never seen. The highest mark in this writing course was publication in the *Prairie Schooner*. Evidence that her judgment was national judgment came from the number of pieces she selected which landed in the "best stories" or "best poems" or "best writing" anthologies each year. As Wimberly had published Eudora Welty before she was known, Bernice Slote published Joyce Carol Oates—and continued to, even after Oates was a much acclaimed novelist. For her, editing was teaching. But, as she was a scholar as well as a poet-writer, Bernice Slote reprinted fugitive pieces by such writers as Stephen Crane, pieces she unearthed in her scholarly investigations. Some of her important Cather discoveries first appeared in her magazine. Under her editorship, the *Prairie Schooner* brought out some of the best writing by new poets and novelists.

One would have to say that Bernice Slote had her life together: it was all of a piece throughout. Modest in her relationship to her profession, she was modest in her relationship to the poems and fiction to which she gave her scholarly and critical attention. "A critic's perception must be dissolved into the work," she told a student one time. "A critic must submit himself to a piece of writing, letting it work upon him, to see what happens." A critic or a scholar must never be dogmatic or "convey that what he has said is all there is to say." Similarly all of us must work at what our hands find to do, where circumstance—or providence—puts us. Bernice Slote was a teacher in Nebraska so she made the most of what teaching and Nebraska had to offer, quietly and in her own way. As a result, her life was a triumph. She traveled a good deal, in America and in Europe, in books and in the imagination. "I liked being at home in the world," she told somebody when she retired. "But I always wanted to come back here. This is home."

Virginia Faulkner

For Virginia Faulkner, Nebraska was home too—but she came back to it by a roundabout route. In a sense, Willa Cather brought her back, and when she arrived, she found Bernice Slote; the two completed the journey together. Willa Cather was like their older sister, showing them the way, they said. Virginia Faulkner was born in Lincoln and had gone to the Cherry

Street School—the predecessor of Prescott School; she always felt that in Lincoln you couldn't be anybody if you had not gone to the Cherry Street School: she and her brother and all their friends had. But she had also gone to Miss Moxley's School in Rome and to Radcliffe. She spent a year or so at the University of Nebraska, long enough to publish a number of funny pieces in *Awgwan* (1929), the campus humor magazine, and to join the Junior League, a society her family wanted her to join. She took such matters with more than a grain of salt—but she took them. A satirist by temperament, she held nothing sacred and laughed aloud at all pretensions, including her own.

From Faulkner's first published pieces—Wimberly printed her first essay in the *Prairie Schooner* (1928) when she was only a freshman—it was clear that she was a wit, with first-class gifts. She honed the wit into scalpel sharpness. Even when she was young, her wit was very formidable indeed. Only the wary engaged her in repartee, and even the clever ones needed to watch their step when they crossed her. She was very precocious, and intimidating.

Virginia Faulkner was a very accomplished writer. After a season or two at the University of Nebraska, she went off to Radcliffe, where, instead of attend to her classes, she wrote a novel. Terribly funny, it was published by Simon and Schuster before she was twenty-one. Called "the Shirley Temple of American Literature" by a reporter, she was as undemure as the Washington Monument. *Friends and Romans* (1934) went through several printings and caused a stir: it was an astonishing performance. Funny, sharp, irreverent, shrewd, it got her a spot on the *Washington Post*, where she was a "special writer." She deserted Radcliffe College without a degree for life as a free lance writer: degrees were much too plebian for this young woman. She liked the *Post* well enough, but she left it for New York City where she became an associate editor on *Town and Country*, a classy magazine of the time. She was proud to write for this prestigious journal; but even more, she liked New York City. Though decades younger than the others, she was included in the Algonquin Circle promptly.

The Algonquin Circle included among others FPA, the columist-wit; Robert Benchley, Dorothy Parker and the most celebrated wits of Manhattan. On this fast track, Virginia Faulkner set the pace. Some of the wisecracks attributed to Dorothy Parker in later years were, in fact, Virginia Faulkner's. Virginia Faulkner of Lincoln, Nebraska was in the big time, and she loved it. When she was called to Hollywood as a writer—at the then fabulous salary of $350.00 a week—she went. Here were more worlds to conquer. She stayed there from 1935 to 1938 writing dialogue for a number of important movies, including a couple starring Greta Garbo; but she liked writing scripts for "Duffy's Tavern" more. "Duffy's Tavern" was a radio program which commanded the skills of all the first-rate writers of comedy, and she held her own with the best of them. They liked and respected her. Virginia Faulkner was brusque and brittle and brilliant, and she knew her way around town. She had earned her place.

She was very successful in a very competitive profession. Two years after *Friends and Romans*, she published a second witty novel, *The Barbarians* (1935), and though both are clearly of their time, they are both extremely readable—and funny—even now, in a different time. She told a reporter when she stopped in Lincoln on one of her infrequent visits to see her brother (her parents had both died early), that she really preferred writing short stories to all other writing, and she certainly had success at it. Her short fiction appeared in the best paying national periodicals: *Vogue, The American Magazine, Cosmopolitan,* and *The Saturday Evening Post* where her hilarious stories about Princess Tulip Murphy—these stories were verbal farces filled with ludicrous high jinks- got her the highest fees, and she demanded them. She collected these pieces in a third novel called *My Hey-Day: The Crackup of the International Set by Princess Tulip Murphy* as told to Virginia Faulkner (1940).

In 1947, Faulkner collaborated with Dana Suesse on a Broadway play *It Takes Two* which was produced by George Abbott, the biggest producer of the time. It starred Martha Scott and Hugh Marlowe. She had a hand in several other Broadway shows as well. By now she had become a thoroughly professional writer, able to turn out whatever was asked of her. When Polly Adler, the most famous madame of the generation, got stuck trying to write her memoirs, she brought her material to Virginia Faulkner, who became the ghost writer of *A House is Not a Home* (1953)—that is, she wrote the book. She created an all-time bestseller. Because she needed money, she did the job for a fee rather than for a split in royalties so she made no money from what enriched Polly Adler and the publisher. The book has sold literally millions of copies: as Virginia Faulkner herself would say, Who says vice does not pay?

And then she came to Nebraska. When Virginia Faulkner returned to Nebraska in 1956, she was a highly competent, highly professional writer of national renown; and Lincoln was neither Broadway nor Hollywood. Why did she come? Her brother was here. Why did she stay? She explained to a reporter many years later. When she began editing, she said, she thought of it only as a short-time job, as something new. She had the realization that while "I know I'm a competent writer, a skilled one, I knew I was never going to rival Shakespeare." Writing had "become harder because the more you do of if, the higher your standards. . .when you're young and ignorant, anything's possible. You have a freshness and are relaxed and everything's happening for the first time." She decided to stay on, indeed to devote the rest of her life to editing, because, as she said, "I got very interested in something that mattered." She became fascinated by scholarship and book publishing. Her next book was *Roundup, A Nebraska Reader* (1957), a brilliant collection of pieces about Nebraska, which sold very well. Since it was prepared in the publisher's office, it also paid her no royalties. Thereafter, she devoted herself to editing other people's books. She found that she liked helping others improve their work. She became necessary to dozens, almost hundreds, of writers, and she enjoyed their profound respect.

Virginia Faulkner became editor-in-chief of the University of Nebraska Press in 1959 at the invitation of Bruce Nicoll, who was, in effect, the refounder of the University of Nebraska Press and her constant collaborator. She continued in that position until 1979 when she died. During those years, she "served the University of Nebraska with distinction and uncompromising integrity. The genius of her editorial judgment and performance, and the brilliance of her scholarship over the past 24 years have been primarily responsible for bringing the University of Nebraska Press to a prominent position as one of the outstanding scholarly publishers of the nation," the Chancellor of the University said upon her death.

All of the authors who worked with Faulkner could vouch for her determination to make each book the Press brought out as good as it could possibly be. She demanded rewriting long after many an author was satisfied with his work. She knew what excellence was, and she expected it of all her associates. They respected her for it and sought her out professionally and socially. Mari Sandoz said she was the best editor in the business "and I ought to know—I've fought with them all." She repeated this often. Many of Virginia Fualkner's authors thought she had taught them not only the cost of first class prose, but how to achieve it. Like her friend Bernice Slote, she was a glorious teacher.

Virginia Faulkner's new career, after her career of free-lance writing in New York and California, was at the Press which, very properly, she came to regard possessively as her own. She loved her job. First she set the standards, as everybody recognized. Second she worked on what in the trade is called the "back-list"—those books which year after year bring a Press credit and profit. In addition to turning manuscripts into books of continuing importance, she found books which, though out of print, deserved public notice. The Bison Books, the distinguished paperback series founded by Bruce Nicoll, served an important regional purpose. It brought to public notice many books that might otherwise have been forgotten. Virginia Faulkner worked on this back-list constantly, adding to it and enriching it. After seeing all the world, Virginia Faulkner devoted herself with a kind of filial piety to her region, celebrating through publishing the merits and peculiarities of her home territory. She was a regionalist but with a difference: *she* knew what the rest of the world was like.

A great accomplishment of her editorship was her work on Cather. It brought both profit and distinction to the Press. It was she who brought back into prominence those studies of Cather, both biographical and critical, that had begun to languish in second-hand book stores. It was she who found new critical studies of Cather that could contribute to our understanding of Cather. She encouraged Bernice Slote to turn her scholarly attention to Willa Cather, and, joining with Slote, edited *The Art of Willa Cather* (1973), a collection of important studies of Cather and her art. At the 24th Annual Spring Conference of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial she was selected for an award for outstanding service to Willa Cather; and, also in 1979, she received the Mari Sandoz Award of the Nebraska Library Association for "significant contributions to the literature of Nebraska and the Great Plains." She had been named a professor in the Department of English as early as 1971 and occasionally taught seminars in writing and editing. She had earned a mighty respect at home and abroad.

Virginia Faulkner's was no ordinary career, and in 1979 all the various aspects of it seemed to be coming together when she wrote the book and lyrics for Robert Beadell's opera, *Out to the Wind*. The opera, an adaptation of the Willa Cather story, "Eric Hermannson's Soul," combined Faulkner's interest in Willa Cather with her knowledge of life in Nebraska during Cather's times. In addition, it gave her an opportunity to write for the stage yet once more.

Robert Beadell has talked of how skillfully she was able to write to precise order. If he needed a four beat line, she gave it to him; if he needed an extended dialogue to prepare for a musical interlude, she delivered it; and if the two of them thought the action needed correcting, she wrote and rewrote scenes according to stage needs, no easy task. After its presentation at the University, the completed opera attracted the attention of professional producers. Some of her friends thought *Out to the Wind* contained some of her finest writing, for it combined the wit for which she was famous with an emotional commitment quite unlike anything she had written before. In this last work, Virginia Faulkner came home, bringing all that she had learned, here and elsewhere.

Both Virginia Faulkner and Bernice Slote held themselves to higher standards than anybody else could possibly call them to. The second-rate was not good enough for them, not because anybody stood behind their chairs, exacting work from them. They stood behind their own chairs. In this sense they were true artists and true aristocrats: the world's standards were not theirs. They were superior to that. They showed the rest of us what it was to strive for excellence; they did not count the cost, for they were intent on results. They knew the first-rate, held themselves to it, and showed us all how we could hold ourselves to it too. The two of them became the most prominent of Cather scholars in all the world, building on the groundwork laid down by Mildred Bennett at the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial in Red Cloud. Whoever studies Willa Cather from now on will have to use the literary and scholarly materials that Slote and Faulkner have identified, edited, and published. Willa Cather is one of the major writers of twentieth century America, and Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulkner are scholars from whom all future scholars must learn. In so far as scholars have immortality, they have it.

Anybody who goes to the library finds lots of books for which Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulkner are responsible. They are in one sense their monuments. But there is another monument also, and it may be more important though less tangible than all the pages of print, all the scholarly accomplishment, the whole panoply of critical acclaim. These two women show anybody who cares to look what can be done by tending to business at home and by minding the affairs of their own place. It takes considerable courage to stay put and let the world come to you, but these two did that, and the world came. There is a lesson in this.

NOTES

Much of the information though not the judgments contained in this essay came from Bernice Slote and Virginia Faulkner, in many conversations over many years. *Prairie Schooner,* Volume 55, Numbers 1 & 2, 1981, is a *festschrift* in honor of Professor Slote. It contains much information about their joint careers. Linda Ulrich interviewed Miss Faulkner for the *Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star,* July 20, 1975; and Professor Slote for the *Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star,* August 2, 1981. Both interviews contain information and direct quotations. Emily Uzendoski published "The Nebraska Literary Scene: Bernice Slote, Editor, Critic, and Cather Scholar" in *Saltillo Review,* Summer/Fall 1973, pp. 38-41. It contains many direct observations by Professor Slote.

Bernie Slote died on February 22, 1983 and is buried with her family in Hickman, Nebraska.

Virginia Faulkner died on September 15, 1980 and is buried with her family in Wyuka Cemetary in Lincoln, Nebraska.

TILLIE OLSEN

Photograph courtesy of the Omaha World-Herald

TILLIE OLSEN

Author, Organizer, Feminist

by Linda Ray Pratt

Dr. Linda Ray Pratt is Professor of English at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Professor Pratt received her Ph.D. degree from Emory University in 1971. Her publications are mainly in Victorian and Modern poetry. Her most recent publication is "Williams's Stetcher Trilogy: 'The Pure Products of America,' " in Studies in American Fiction, *Spring 1982. At the University, Professor Pratt teaches graduate courses in Victorian and Modern poetry and 19th century American novel. She is also Chair of the Graduate Committee.*

While much of Nebraska's history and culture arise out of the farm life of the Great Plains and the economy of agriculture, such urban centers as Omaha were made up of the industrial environment and immigrant culture more often associated with such cities as Chicago. Author Tillie Olsen, born January 14, 1913, in Omaha, is a child of this world of packing houses, class conflict, and unionizing. Her fiction is largely drawn from her and her family's experiences in Omaha, and it represents an important part of the Nebraska literary heritage. Her published work includes her novel, *Yonnondio* (1974); her book of essays *Silences* (1978); and the award-winning collection of stories, *Tell Me a Riddle* (1961). Her work has won wide critical acclaim and ranks among the most respected contemporary fiction. In addition, Olsen has long supported working class organizations, such as unions, and women's causes. Her feminist activities in behalf of women writers and women's studies have made her a leader in this field. Today she lives in San Francisco and travels the country carrying out the literary and feminist work which first took shape in her Omaha youth.

Biographical Sketch

Olsen's parents, Samuel and Ida Beber Lerner, came to Omaha from Russia after the failure of the 1905 revolution in which they had participated. The family lived in a home near 25th and Caldwell Streets. Her Russian Jewish immigrant parents were also socialists, and the young Tillie Lerner grew up in a household in which political commitment and activity were a way of life. Her father worked at a variety of jobs, including in the packing houses, and ran as the Socialist candidate for state representative. He was also state secretary of the Nebraska Socialist Party.[1] Olsen's parents were a major influence in her life, and many of the characters in her fiction are in part based on them.

In the acknowledgements to her books of essays on writers, *Silences,* Olsen lists among the educational forces in her life Kellom and Long Elementary Schools.[2] Later she went to Central High School. Despite her socialist home, Olsen has said that she "didn't really learn about class until I crossed the tracks to Central High School," which she called her "first College-of-Contrasts."[3] Olsen, one of six children, dropped out of Central High before graduating, but much of her real education came from the sources she would pursue throughout her life—book stores, political groups, and public libraries. In addition to the "old revolutionary pamphlets, laying around the house," Olsen recalled for one scholar of her work that she was "determined to read everything in the fiction category in the library, making it almost through the M's."[4] Years later, Olsen wrote in an introduction to Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* the story of how she had discovered the book as a young woman:

> *I first read Life in the Iron Mills in one of three water-stained, coverless, bound volumes of the* Atlantic Monthly, *bought for ten cents each in an Omaha junkshop. I was fifteen. Contributions to those old* Atlantics *were published anonymously, and I was ignorant of any process whereby I might find the name of the author of this work which meant increasingly more to me over the years, saying, with a few other books, "Literature can be made out of the lives of despised people," and "You, too, must write."*[5]

According to Deborah Rosenfelt, who has seen Olsen's youthful diaries, her reading as a young woman was wide and eclectic while at the same time including many more authors with progressive views than perhaps other readers of the day would have chosen:

> *Her reading was predisposed toward what she calls "the larger tradition of social concern"-American populists like Walt Whitman; European social critics like Ibsen, Hugo, the early Lawrence, and*

especially Katherine Mansfield; black writers like W.E.B. DuBois and Langston Hughes; American women realists like Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Willa Cather, and Ellen Glasgow; as well as leftists like Upton Sinclair, John Dos Passos, Mike Gold, Guy Endore; and socialist feminists like Olive Shreiner, whose Story of an African Farm *she refers to in the journal as "incredibly my book," and Agnes Smedley, whose* Daughter of Earth *she would later bring to the attention of the Feminist Press and a new generation of readers.*[6]

Olsen's ideological education became more disciplined when she joined the Young Communist League in 1931. Her activist role now led her to Kansas City where she worked in a tie factory and helped organize packing house workers. In these early years of the Great Depression, she was, she recalls, "trying to explain to workers that the end of prohibition was not going to bring prosperity."[7] She was arrested for leafleting packing house workers and was jailed for five months in the Argentine jail (a section of Kansas City). "My crime," she explains, "was making loud and unreasonable noises. There wasn't any money for bail." Reflecting in recent years on this experience, Olsen has called it "an education": "There were all kinds of people there. It was very transient like many jails are. There were a lot of women who were first-time hookers and some who were disabled. I learned what being free is about in a different kind of way."[8] Jail life worsened the pleurisy which Olsen had contracted at her work station in the tie factory which placed her between a radiator and an open window, and she returned to Omaha to recover.

Olsen's journals indicate that she always conceived of herself as a writer and believed the craft of writing was linked with political ideals. The journals intersperse statements of literary ambitions with comments and questions of current political concern. After her return to Omaha, nursing the condition that threatened to become tuberculosis, Olsen moved to Faribault, Minnesota, where she began *Yonnondio.* In the story of the Holbrooks, Olsen tried to combine the realism of the lives of the midwestern poor, "the despised people" for whom society opens no doors, with her concern for economic and social justice.

In 1933 she moved to California, first to Stockton and later to San Francisco. She continued to work on her poetry, the draft of *Yonnondio,* and the activities of the Young Communist League. After her marriage to Jack Olsen, a printer and comrade in the YCL, Olsen's artistic life was largely absorbed in her roles as mother to four daughters, organizer and supporter in union struggles, and full-time employee in a variety of jobs necessary to support the family. *Silences* tells of how years of motherhood, nine-hour a day jobs, and political activity destroyed the opportunity to write. The hope of writing was "the air I breathed," but the "simplest circumstances for creation did not exist."[9]

Once Olsen took eight months away from work to write, but despite her efforts to protect writing time when she returned to full-time work (on temporary jobs such as Kelly girl or

Western Agency girl),[10] the fifteen hours of responsibilities each day soon destroyed the writing. It was not until the mid-1950's when her children were all grown that Olsen again had writing time. Her collection of short fiction, *Tell Me a Riddle*, was published in 1961, and her long lost *Yonnondio*, in 1974. *Silences*, the book of essays relating to the "unnatural silences" of women writers, herself among them, was published in 1978.

The literary work was in abeyance for over twenty years, but the political activism continued. In 1934 she was active in the San Francisco Maritime strike and helped to publish *Waterfront Worker*, the Longshoremen's publication. Part of *Yonnondio* was published in 1934 in *Partisan Review*, and a few poems were published in the *Daily Worker*. In the 1940's, she was president of the California CIO's Women's Auxiliary and organized war relief for the CIO. She wrote a column for *People's World*, and took a role in such non-political organizations as the PTA. In the 1950's her family was victimized by the McCarthy repressions.[11]

Olsen returned to her writing, first with a creative writing fellowship at Stanford in 1956-57 and later with a Ford grant in literature in 1959, both of which brought the time Olsen needed for work. Though the writing was slow and laborious, by 1961 Olsen had published what is still her best collection of short fiction, *Tell Me a Riddle* (Lippincott, 1961; rpt. Delacorte, 1978). The title story was awarded the 1961 O. Henry award for best American short story. *Tell Me a Riddle* and her story *I Stand Here Ironing*, also in this collection, have been widely anthologized and critically praised. *Tell Me a Riddle* was the basis for the 1981 film of the same name starring Melvyn Douglas and Lila Kedrova.

After the publication of *Tell Me a Riddle*, Olsen held several teaching posts and won numerous awards. She was a visiting professor at Amherst College in 1969-70 and a visiting instructor at Stanford University in 1971. In 1973 she was writer in residence at MIT, and in 1978 she was Regents Lecturer at the University of California. In 1979, she was honored in her home state when the University of Nebraska gave her a Doctor of Arts and Letters. Her special contributions to women were recognized in 1980 when she received the Ministry of Women Award of the Unitarian Women's Federation. Writing time in recent years has been funded by awards from Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study, 1962-64; the National Endowment for the Arts, 1968; a Guggenheim fellowship in 1975-76; and the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1975.[12]

For several years now Olsen has traveled the country giving numerous readings at colleges and universities. Through these appearances and in her various positions as visiting writer in prestigious universities, Olsen has had occasion to present to her audiences her feminist views and knowledge about women writers. Two of her essays in *Silences*, "Silences: When Writers Don't Write," and "Women Who Are Writers in Our Century: One out of Twelve," appeared initially in *Harper's* (October 1965) and *College English* (October 1972) where they had wide influence. In her teaching she introduced such courses as "Literature of the Working Class and the Human Struggle for Freedom," and "Women in Fact and Fiction." In these courses she used many books that had been dropped out of our cultural awareness.

One was *Life in the Iron Mills*, gathered by Olsen as xerox copies of the old *Atlantic Monthly* pages which she had read as a girl. Olsen persuaded Feminist Press to bring out Davis's book, for which she wrote a long, thoughtful, and partly autobiographical introduction. Olsen also helped bring to the attention of Feminist Press such other favorites from her early reading as Smedley's *Daughter of Earth* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. All three of these books have become standard items in curricula in Women's Studies programs across the country. Olsen also prepared a reading list of books for women's studies that became a guiding document in the preparation of such courses after it was published in *Women's Studies Newsletter* (Feminist Press).[13]

While Olsen's literary work is the most important of her contributions, her influence in the development of women's studies and as a spokesperson for feminist issues has national significance. Ironically, the young woman who dropped out of Central High in Omaha has in fact become an important contributor to education as one of the pioneers in course development for women's studies. The strength of her portraits of women in her writing, her powerful presentation of her work in public readings, and her efforts to bring to light "lost" and "silenced" women writers have won for Olsen not just respect but as novelist Margaret Atwood has put it, "reverence."[14]

The Literary Work

Most critics agree that *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* shows many of the faults of a young writer but is still among the most honest presentations of the poor to come out of the Depression.[15] The history of the book illustrates the disruption of Olsen's writing career over the years. Begun in 1932 when she was 19, the book was not completed until the late 1950's when her husband Jack found the manuscript among some stored papers. Olsen did not attempt to rewrite the novel, perhaps wisely avoiding the layering of a mature woman's view over that of the young woman. Instead, she sorted and selected the various versions of different scenes which were among the manuscript in what she has called an "arduous partnership" of the young writer and the older one.

In its published form, the novel tells the story of the Holbrook family as they free themselves from the terrors of the mines in Wyoming only to learn the despair of failure on the farm they buy in South Dakota and ultimately the poverty and urban oppression in the packing house city (Omaha) where they wind up.[16] Olsen's original plan for the novel included a much broader story. Rosenfelt has summarized the original plan for the novel as follows:

Jim Holbrook was to have

> *become involved in a strike in the packing houses, a strike that would draw out the inner strength and courage of his wife Anna, politicize the older children as well, and involve some of the women in the packing plant as strike leaders in this essential collective action. Embittered by the length of the strike and its lack of clear initial success, humiliated by his inability to support his family, Jim Holbrook was finally to have abandoned them. Anna was to die trying to give herself an abortion. Will and Mazie were to go West to the Imperial Valley in California, where they would themselves become organizers. Mazie was to grow up to become an artist, a writer who could tell the experiences of her people, her mother especially living in her memory. In Mazie's achievement, political consciousness and personal creativity were to coalesce.*[17]

These ambitions, typical of proletarian fiction of the 1930's, never materialize, and the novel is an almost unrelievedly grim picture of a struggling family plagued by all the problems one associates with poverty. Though alleviated only by an occasional rhapsodic moment, the book presents a compelling picture of the shame and sheer misery of those who do not have enough for basic human needs and who feel despised by the classes above them. The title is taken from Walt Whitman's poem, *Yonnondio,* a "lament for the aborigines":

> *Race of the woods, the landscapes free and falls. /No picture, poem, statement, passing them to the future: Yonnondio! Yonnodio! - unlimn'd they disappear; /Today gives place, and fades-the cities, farms, factories fade; /A muffled sonorous sound, a wailing word is borne through the air for a moment, /Then blank and gone and still, and utterly lost.*[18]

Lacking the coalescence of the political and creative vision which Olsen planned for the young girl Mazie to achieve, *Yonnondio* is an eloquent lament for those who are "utterly lost" and disappear "unlimn'd."

The story is presented primarily through the point of view of Mazie, the star-gazing child. The horror of the mines, real to her father Jim because he must go down in them, is dramatized in the story through Mazie's terrifying experience with Sheen McEvoy, the "loony" who decides that the mine needs an innocent child to satisfy its appetite for men. McEvoy, attempts to throw Mazie down the mine shaft, an event that also riverts her father to his determination to extract the family from the life of the mines and find a farm for them in South Dakota. Later, the pastoral dream which the farm represents to the whole family is made palpable in Mazie's lone ecstasies lying on the prairie floor or gazing at the mystery of the stars. Old Mr. Caldwell, the educated farm neighbor who tells her that the stars are not flowers but suns introduces her to the wonder of education and leaves her some books when he dies. The promise of life in harmony with a beauteous environment and an illuminated imagination awaken in

Mazie during the year on the farm. This child's vision is in fact the vision of the whole family. Later when the dream of the farm has dissolved in the realities of packing town slums, both Mazie and her mother hold in their hearts the image of the farm.

Olsen is not a romantic writer, though, and the dreamy imagination of Mazie is starved by the vacuity of life lived hand to mouth, where the "lived happily ever after" books her mother brings from the library are too irrelevant for her to bother to read. The dream of education is lost, like the books Mr. Caldwell left her and her father sold for fifty cents. Though she remains poignantly capable of visionary moments and flights of imagination, Mazie's fantasy world at the end of the novel is furnished with the inane Hollywood ideas of glamour acted out by Jinella, her playmate whose "text" is such movies as "Shiek of Araby. Broken Blossoms. Slave of Love. She Stopped at Nothing. The Fast Life. The Easiest Way" (p. 128). The education plan her mother hears of in which one puts aside a quarter a week is nothing but a scheme to defraud the poor. Olsen succeeds powerfully in suggesting the tragedy of poverty by placing the center of the story in this imaginative child whose circumstances in life close down the promise of the world for her by the time she is nine. All that Mazie could have been will pass "unlimn'd," and she is one of those valuable ones who is "utterly lost."

Olsen's strategy of clashing the bleakness of circumstances against the fragile human potential is vividly dramatized in the scene in which Mazie's protracted effort to hold the dream of the farm against the reality of the packing town oppression is shattered by a fall on the sidewalk. Pushed down by a mean-spirited drunk, Mazie's flesh grates against the pavement and her face is wet with a blob of spit: "She put her arm around the lamppost. Its solidity was fearful to her. As for the first time she saw the street and people, and it entered into her like death" (p. 85). Shaken out of her "sweet dream," she sees about her the faces of people who do not care and who brutalize each other. The buildings seem distorted and the sky "only a slab of one, draining color, vanishing into darkness." She tries to run from this reality, but it is the vision of the farm she loses:

> *Here near the top of the street, she could see the shattered sun die in a sky of bruises over the decayed line of houses and buildings. Way down, like a hog, a great hulk of building wallowed. A—R—M—O—U—R—S gray letters shrieked. Armours, said Mazie over and over: Armoursarmoursarmours. Beautiful, suspended, the farm, softened by twilight floated an instant before her eyes. A new bulk, "C'mon, hand it over," shattered it forever. It passed her, and Mazie could see it was two people, and the man was twisting the woman's arm. Armoursarmours. Every step was pain, every look was pain. The spit felt on her face again and the terrible face of the soldier as he ran down the stairs thickened her in horror that over it held the shadow of something mushy opening in the middle, pressed hard against her cheeks. (pp. 85-860.*

The images in this unrelenting parade of urban horrors--drunks, prostitutes, slums, factories,-which push their way into Mazie's mind in this scene mirror the accumulation of realities that press the Holbrook family to what readers feel can only be their elegiac end. Mazie's chant of Armoursarmoursarmours suggests the root cause of this sickness and shame that consume the family's strength and hopes. Intuitively the child names the source of the foulness in their lives that hangs in the air with the smell of vomit.

In the character of Jim, the father, Olsen illustrates the exploitive nature of the capitalist system. Jim's life is cheap to those who employ him, and the mining companies, banks, and packing house for which he works want only to use him up or speed him up to the point of collapse. In the coal mine he had worked at unnecessary risks because the supervisor couldn't be bothered to check for gas pockets. On the farm, the demands of the bank were so great that at the end of a year of grueling work, he owed the bank more than he had made. At Armours and Cudahy, the bosses speed up the production line past human endurance. The last episode of the book takes place in a Nebraska heatwave, a week of temperatures above 100 degrees. In the packing houses the workers are but part of a machine, "geared, meshed, timed, controlled." Only the comradely cooperation of the workers to relieve each other when one is about to collapse keeps down the casualties. The packing house is a vomitous hell in which the grease of flesh from human and animal drips and scalds:

> *Year-round breathing with open mouth, learning to pant shallow to endure the excrement reek of offal, the smothering stench from the blood house below. Windowless: bleared dank light. Clawing, dinning, jutting gnashing noises, so overwhelming that only at scream pitch can the human voice be heard. Heat of hell year round, for low on their head from the lowering ceiling, the plant's steam machinery. Incessant slobber down off its oil and scalding water onto their rubber caps, into their rubber galoshes. O feet always doubly in water--inside boots, outside boots, Running water overflow from casings wash. Spurting steam geysers. Slippery uncertain footing on the slimy platform. Treacherous sudden torrents swirling (the strong hose trying to wash down the blood, the oil, the offal, the slime). And over and over, the one consistant motion-ruffle fat pullers, pluck separators, bladder, kidney, bung, small and middle gut cutters, cleaners, trimmers, slimers, flooders, inflators--meshed, geared. (p. 134).*

The bosses punish these workers for hosing off in the yards in the 110 degree heat. Armoursarmours-armours, the explanation for the ugliness Mazie can no longer evade. Olsen's evocation of the nauseating workplace of the packing houses is reminiscent of Upton Sinclair's picture of the Chicago meat packing industry in *The Jungle* (1906), but her novel never makes the overt socialistic analysis with which *The Jungle* ends. *Yonnondio* remains focused on the human emotions and tribulations of the suffering family.

Mazie's mother, Anna, is one of several characters Olsen has created that are worn out by the double burden of the deprivations of poverty and the depletion of motherhood without help or health. Her experience of motherhood is spared none of the additional meannesses that poverty inflicts on children--the whining feverishness of malnutrition, rashes on the bottom from wet diapers and on the cheeks from exposure, running sores from filth and insect bites. Throughout the book Anna is pregnant, giving birth, or miscarrying while still attending to the other children. She is frequently battered by her husband who comes home drunk to escape his own deadening fatigue and frustration. Eventually his "domestic rape" of her precipitates a miscarriage. While Mazie blocks the reality of slum life, Anna is lost in a haze of pain that literally blots out her awareness of life. Nevertheless, Anna's dreamy nature and reverence for the pastoral world are the model for such sensitivities in her children. After her long illness a frail Anna takes the children in search of dandelion greens one morning. They walk so far they lose the smell of the packing houses, and in a rhapsodic interlude, Anna's own mysterious contentment and peace momentarily balm her children:

> *The fingers stroked, spun a web, cocooned Mazie into happiness and intactness and selfness. Soft wove the bliss round hurt and fear and want and shame--the old worn fragile bliss, a new frail selfness bliss, healing, transforming. Up from the grasses, from the earth, from the broad tree trunk at her back, latent life streamed and seeded. The air and self shone boundless. Absently, her mother stroked; stroked unfolding, wingedness, boundlessness. p. 119.*

The "boundlessness" is another illusion, however, and Mazie is never to see this look on her mother's face but once again. Deadly circumstances suffocate the Holbrooks in the form of the heat wave, the speed up, and the dust storms that appear at the end of the novel, an omen of what lies ahead for such families when the dustbowl joins Depression in a double blow to midwestern lives. Reviewer John Alfred Avant has said that Olsen fails to lift Anna out of pathos and that she remains insubstantial.[19] She is a touching character without ever being a fully believable one, just as her capacity for the ecstatic can never really change the quality of the family's life. Anna fights for order and beauty and an opportunity for her children, but she is without weapons and the tides of pain and heat waft her away. She is, as she tells the children, "balloony," and her insubstantiality adds to the pessimism of the book because she leaves us no hope that those with gentle values, loving hearts, motherly devotion, or the capacity for imagination and ambition have the strength to triumph over the exploitive forces that consume their lives. Olsen's later female characters will have a feistiness and stubbornness about them that allow them to confront life and reject total defeat.

Though Anna's portrait offers little comfort to women readers, Olsen's portrayal of the dragging responsibilties of motherhood coupled with the oppressions of poverty and abuse vivifies the grim lives of many women whom history and literature have neglected.

Tell Me a Riddle, written by the mature Tillie Olsen, is a more artistically successful book. It is composed of four stories: "I Stand Here Ironing," "Hey Sailor, What Ship?" and "O Yes," all of which are short; and "Tell Me a Riddle" which is novella-length. Though "Tell Me a Riddle" is clearly the best fiction Olsen has yet published, the other stories are fine and deserve at least brief coment. The collection as a whole received high critical praise for its prose style and perfectly realized stories. "I Stand Here Ironing" and the title story have frequently been anthologized and are contemporary classics in women's literature.

"I Stand Here Ironing" (dated 1953-54 and first printed in *Pacific Spectator)* is a mother's painfully acute analysis of what she could not manage to do for her daughter. Emily, the first child, was born when her mother was only 19, and she was a child "of anxious, not proud love."[20] When the father abandoned them, the mother had to leave the child in a nursery school where "the fatigue of the long day, and the lacerations of group life in the kinds of nurseries that are only parking places for children" (p. 11) further damaged the girl. Some of what the mother remembers is what she had to do; some of it what she was not yet wise enough *not* to do. The end result is that her lovely baby grows into a shy and contained child who stiffens when she is hugged. Emily "has much to her and probably little will come of it. She is a child of her age, of depression, of war, of fear" (p. 20). Though the mother's reflections about Emily are almost unbearably candid and painful, she sees a strength in her daughter that, if not all that it might have been, is at least enough to give her comfort: "Let her be. So all that is in her will not bloom-but in how many does it? There is still enough left to live by" (p. 21).

The mother's wisdom in this story is that of life's diminished hopes. A look back on hard times is a look of regret, of potentials that were muffled and lost, of openness that learned to close up. Circumstances prevented this mother from doing all the things she wanted and needed to do for her child, and human fallibility helped mar the quality of what was done. But the mother is strong; and so is Emily. Each is scarred and changed by what was not done well, but they survive with their capacity for tenderness and forgiveness intact. Both have the courage for life, and the honesty to admit "what should have been and what cannot be helped" (p.9).

The story has searing emotional impact because it strips away the sentimentality and self-deceit that people usually invent to provide acceptable rationales for what they do. We wince at the directness of the mother's appraisal as she watches before her the living evidence of the young but permanently damaged life that was in her keeping. "I Stand Here Ironing" is a singular expression of the exigencies which modern women face when childrearing is done alone, squeezed in between exhausting jobs, dependent on day care that is not "caring," and by mothers who are too young and harassed always to meet the standards set by baby care "experts."

"Hey Sailor, What Ship?" is the story of Whitey, an aging sailor who expects little in life beyond something to drink, an occasional visit in the one home where he can expect a welcome, and to be left alone. Though to Lennie and Helen and their children he had once represented adventure, things unknown, and a bag of presents on his return, his long years of drink and erratic behavior have made them less tolerant of Whitey's visits. Whitey himself is worn out by the loneliness of his life and the struggles to build the union that already the younger men do not see as the "brotherhood" which he and others who went through the 1934 strike regarded it. This visit, Whitey is sick, sick with life without anchor, labor struggles that don't produce comradeship, class bias where "uptown [is] forbidden, not your language, not your people, not your country" (p. 45). Even the children who normally thrilled at his return have grown resentful at this "wino" "who brings presents and whirls you around and expects you to jump for his old money" (p. 43).

The story is a sad but inevitable conclusion: though the family cares about Whitey, his visits are an intrusion into the organized life they must lead to sustain the home in such limited financial circumstances, and Whitey cannot claim their abiding devotion when his warmth and gifts are so inconstant a presence in their lives. The parents try to teach the children understanding, but understanding cannot really heal all that is wrong in Whitey's life. He has "the memories to forget, the dreams to be stifled, the hopeless hopes to be murdered." The story ends without comforts on either side, and Olsen repeats the unanswerable question that functions as a refrain:

> "Hey Sailor, what ship?
> Hey Marinero, what ship?"

"O Yes" is one of Olsen's most complicated stories. It tells of two twelve-year old girls, Carol, who is white, and Parialee, who is black. Carol and her mother go to church with Parialee and her mother for Parialee's baptism, but it is Carol who is "baptized." At least three themes are woven together in Carol's response to the church service. When Carol becomes ill and faints in the emotional church service, Parialee's mother says that Carol was scared at seeing people let go because the white child is "not used to hearing what people keeps inside. . ." (p. 60).

Much later when Carol asks her mother why she cannot forget the episode, "why is it like it is and why do I have to care?," her mother thinks, "caring asks doing. It is a long baptism into the seas of humankind, my daughter."

But the story also dramatizes the racial differences that pull the two girls apart when they reach the conformist teen years. Perhaps Carol does care, but she is also uncomfortable with her black friends. She knows "Parry" is worthy of her friendship, but the kids at school have shamed her out of this childhood association.[21] The emotional display of the black congregation does invade Carol's controlled space, but her discomfort began when she saw other students from the school. She worries that one of the boys she sees may say something to her in school about being there, might talk to her "right in front of somebody at school." The strangeness of the emotions in the service which she tries to wall out have their power over her *because* both she and Parialee sense the changes that are pulling them apart. Parry already talks the jive talk of a young person separating herself from the dominant group, and Carol is already self-conscious about her friendship with Parry. Adding to the pressure on the two girls are their mothers, who encourage the mixed race friendship. When Carol faints and has to leave the church Parry tells an apologetic Carol, "I'll feel better you not there to watch. It was our mommas wanted you to be there, not me."

Carol's insistence that "I really truly did nearly faint, didn't I, Mother that time I went to church with Parry?" reveals the girl's self-betrayal. Her guilt is not that she fainted, but that she is scared of what she saw. What made Carol sick was not just the communal emotion of the church, but the differences in her world and Parry's, differences that she did not like and was not prepared to accept. As Carol becomes more involved in the white girl's world of clubs and skating and library, she puts aside her mother's reminders of Parry with excuses. It is never convenient for Carol to include Parry any longer. On the other side is Parialee, who hides her hurt under the fast-talking street jive. At school, she is not in the accelerated group where Carol is, and when she brings Carol's homework to her during Carol's illness, she does not tell Carol that the teacher misconstrued this act of friendship between neighbors as something Parry was doing because her mother worked for Carol's mother. Her only tell-tale gesture is when she tosses up "their year-ago, arm-in-arm graduation picture, replacing it deftly, upside down. . ." (p. 68). Later when Carol awakes from her feverish sleep to a black spiritual on the radio, she becomes almost hysterical and runs shrieking through the house, "Turn it off, Mother, turn it off!"

Carol's mother hopes that the child's "caring" will mean "doing," but Carol is too immature at twelve to resist peer pressure. She is also not yet ready for the unspoken explanations which her mother could give her for what she saw in the church. Her mother thinks of "the special history of the Negro people," and the emotionalism which is "a characteristic of the religion of all oppressed peoples," remembering her own parents, who presumably were oppressed in the old country. Though by the standards of contemporary rhetoric Carol's mother may treat Parry's family too much like "a minority group," she nevertheless has genuine insight as to the reasons for the differences in the church service which Carol saw and the ones familiar to her. Her older daughter, Jeannie, thinks her mother is naive about the realities of interracial friendships in junior high, however, and she bluntly tells her mother to "Grow up":

> *Jeannie's voice was harsh. "Parialee's collecting something else now. Like her own crowd. Like jivetalk and rhythm and*

> *blues. Like teachers who treat her like a dummy and white kids who treat her like dirt; boys who think she's really something and chicks who. . ."* (p.63).

Jeannie tells her parents of "how they sort" at school and of the intense peer pressure which makes it impossible for Carol and Parry to hang on to the childhood relationship. Finally she puts it in class terms; if her parents want Jeannie and Carol to be pals with black children, they should move to an upper class neighborhood where "it's the deal to be buddies" with the handful of black children with professionals for parents, but not here in their lower class school where racism is "for real." The parents retreat from this accusative barrage in much the same way Carol did in the church.

Behind the mother's idealized desire for black friends, Jeannie's harsh analysis of how it is in the schools, and Carol's self-deceit about her own emotions and fears, there lies a real commitment to racial harmony. Her parents' teachings make Carol's betrayal of Parialee an emotional crisis that she cannot get past, and even Jeannie's bitter denial that teenagers of different races can be friends reveals an acute awareness of the hurt to both sides when racism intervenes. Perhaps the parents are naive about the nature of school life, but they have nevertheless instilled in their daughters a sensitivity to racial problems that sets them aside from the other children. Though Carol's "caring" is not yet clearly what her mother hopes it is, the nagging emotion that the girl cannot get out of her mind may well worry her toward a genuine opposition to racism. She has, as her mother says, been immersed and can no longer live "untouched." Behind her mother's promotion of the friendship lies the ideal of communal love. Parry's mother had defined the black church as a "home" where people "can feel how they feel and maybe let to come out. So they can go on." At the end of the story Carol's mother longs for just such a home herself:

> *While in her, her own need leapt and plunged for the place of strength that was not-where one could scream or sorrow while all knew and accepted, and gloved and loving hands waited to support and understand.* (p. 71).

This "place" is implicitly the socialistic ideal of classlessness and comradeship where race cannot divide. Such places do not now exist in American society, but only people like Carol's and Parialee's families who work for it and who teach their children to cherish this vision, keep alive the dream of an egalitarian community. Olsen's account of Carol's "baptism" recognizes that the radicalizing process is often a slow, painful one, and that social and economic pressures can scare us out of living up to our beliefs.

Tillie Olsen's finest piece of fiction is a novella, "Tell Me a Riddle" (1961), which in large part is based on her mother and dedicated to her.[22] In the novella, Eva is dying of cancer, but the sadness in this very poignant story is "for that in her which never lived" and for that in her husband, David, which was "lost." Eva and David had immigrated to the United States from Russia where they had been part of the 1905 revolution. In America, Eva had stifled herself to the demands of children and home, and David had put aside the old beliefs as he worked in the new country to make a living. The old passion for humanity and ideological commitment they had shared in their youthful love had been subdued, and in its place had grown roots of a bitter quarrel that in old age "swelled up visible, split the earth between them, and the tearing shook even to the children. . . ."

In her dying weeks, Eva remembers and revivifies the old struggles and beliefs, and as she does so her husband comes to realize how little he had known about her these many post-Russia years and how much he, too, has lost. At the end, Eva reveals to him that "still" she believed in her socialist vision and had "lived by it." This revelation of his wife's inner life teaches David again the value of life given to belief and comradeship: "that joyous certainty, that sense of mattering, of moving and being moved, of being one and indivisible with the great of the past, with all that freed, ennobled"(p. 122).

In her dying, Eva reveals that her values were never "betrayed in her inner being," and that what her son, Lennie, thought had never lived in her had only been submerged. The burdens of motherhood supressed Eva, and now that her children are grown, she is free to reawaken the old spirit. Olsen gives an unsentimental, and perhaps, to some readers, startling portrait of a woman so gald to be free of children that even her grandchildren are unwelcome. With her illness upon her, Eva needs time to live within herself and "never again to be forced to move to the rhythms of others" (p. 76). David takes her to visit each of the children after her cancer is found, largely to avoid being in their home alone together with the sickness, but Eva only wants to "go home." Her house, which now stays clean, is "no longer an enemy. . . engaging her in endless defeating battle," but a place where "she had won to a reconciled peace" (p. 77). David wants to sell the house and move to the retirement home his union sponsors.

The quarrel between them is esentially one of past versus future; her mind is on the old days and ways, the places where she struggled and knew pain and joy; his mind is on the retirement "haven" where he can put past worries and present responsibilities away at last. These attitudes are suggestive of their responses to the sense of mattering they felt in their youth. Eva refuses in bitter quarrel after bitter quarrel to sell the house, a resistance that is implicitly her resistance to abandoning the knowledge of how to live that she had known as a young girl in Russia and must recapture if her life is to have meaning and her death be accepted.

When they visit the daughter, Vivi, a new grandchild is placed in her arms, but Eva stiffens and puts the child aside. The baby is "seductive" like her own children and her mother-love for them had been, seductive of the self that should live its more noble wisdom. She goes through the motions of a good grandmother and sits through the "command performance" of the children: "we command you to be the audience." In the afternoons she "rests" and tries to escape the world of children and home which Vivi and David press on her in the belief that it should comfort her. She hides in the closet to escape, but even that territory is invaded by the grandchild who finds her there and says, "Is this where you hide too, Grammy?" Olsen's portrayal of Eva is virtually unique in literature for its presentation of the values in herself a woman suppresses in motherhood, the cost of that denial, and the welcome release from those chains, albeit tender ones, when children are grown.

One of the "costs" of subduing her values to the demands of the maternal years is the loss of the real heritage Eva might have given her children. Her daughter Hannah asks to light the candles in the Friday night Jewish ritual of benediction, forgetting that her mother never did it. Eva regards the Jewish religion as "superstition" and when David explains that Hannah does it for "tradition," for "heritage," Eva answers that Hannah does it "for emptiness." Religion is "mumbo words and magic lights to scare away ghosts": "Religion that stifled and said: in Paradise, woman, you will be the footstool of your husband, and in life--poor chosen Jew--ground under, despised, trembling in cellars. And cremated. And cremated" (p. 90). If Hannah has only emptiness for tradition, it is in part because Eva asked of her "only hands to help." She did not teach the children the lessons that gave her own life meaning:

> *Heritage. How have we come from our savage past, how no longer to be savages--this to teach. To look back and learn what humanizes--this to teach. To smash all ghettos that divide us--not to go back, not to go back--this is to teach. Learned books in the house, will humankind live or die, and she gives to her boys superstition. (p.90).*

The eldest daughter, Clara, bitterly thinks, "pay me back, Mother, pay me back for all you took from me. . . I do not know you, Mother. Mother, I never knew you." It is too late for Clara, and for all the children to ask: "and what did you learn with your living, Mother, and what do we need to know?" Only in the granddaughter Jeannie (presumably the same Jeannie of "O Yes") who cares for Eva in the last weeks of her life is the cherished heritage passed on. Jeannie is like Lisa, the young girl Eva idolized in prison in Russia who knew "life was holy, knowledge was holy." When Eva is dying Jeannie comforts David by telling him that "it is all right" because Eva has returned in her spirit and imagination to the joyousness of the Russian village, even to memories of a wedding.

Part of what Eva and David excluded in themselves was their connection to history in the twentieth century. When Eva brokenly repeats part of a favorite quotation from Victor Hugo, David remembers it, too: "in the twentieth century ignorance will be dead, dogma will be dead, war will be dead, and for all humankind one country--of fulfillment. . . ." The century brought two world wars, the holocaust, and the atom bomb, though. When "the bereavement and betrayal [David] had sheltered,. . . hidden" from himself uncoils and springs on him, it comes with the vision of "the monstrous shapes of what had actually happened in the century" (p. 120). When he tries to comfort himself that their dream had come true in the comfortable lives of their children, he answers himself, "And are there no other children in the world?" These torturous thoughts assail David until he sees what he has lost, and learns that his wife "still believes. . .," "humankind. . .one has to believe." With this realization, he wants to stand on corners giving to all the gift of life ennobled, believing, mattering.

In "Tell Me a Riddle" Olsen not only reveals the spiritual agony when the inner life and communal contact of a woman are lost in the responsibilities of motherhood, but also a devasting picture of what humanity lacks when it lives without belief in itself and the importance of humankind. Eva and David were socialists whose struggles in the new country made it too easy to let their beliefs slip from the forefront of their lives. Living outside "what matters," outside the sense of "being one and indivisible. . . with all that freed, ennobled," drove the ugly root between the husband and wife, robbed the children of a concretely meaningful heritage, prevented both parents and children from really knowing each other, and took from the parents their sense of a place in history. The emptiness that David recognizes and that Eva labels in Hannah's mumbo rituals is emblematic of the spiritual emptiness in much of American society where the individual is stressed before the group, and where getting ahead for one's self and one's family is the expected personal ambition.

Olsen's story confronts readers with the power and importance of beliefs--of belief in humanity and belief in political ideology--to give life meaning. Eva's final imaginative effort to restore the self she most truly was, and its revelatory impact on her husband, affirm the wonders of the human mind and people's strength to seize again and again the "holy knowledge" of what makes life matter.[23]

Few writers in American life have so touchingly and undogmatically portrayed the need for a life lived with ideological commitment outside the individualistic and narrow personal concerns of the bourgeoise. Olsen's "Tell Me a Riddle" is profound and poetic. Her talent for language, for the working class Jewish dialect of Eva and David, for the rhythms of the speech of the poor and uneducated like the Holbrooks, has a freshness that escapes the literary artificialities of much fiction that attempts to show the life of working class people. Her psychological insights penetrate where few other writers have entered: the minds of mother who love their children but are oppressed by them; of women who want to be free of the demands of those who think women only find their fulfillment in "serving" others; of blacks and whites who care about racial equality and find themselves unable to live by it; of radicals who suppress the best in themselves only to find the betrayal costs them, their children, and their society a tradition of trust and love in a place of emptiness, individualistic isolation, and selfishness.

Though Tillie Olsen's adult life has been mainly lived in California, her fiction is rooted in the world of her childhood and the experiences of her parents, a world of packing houses, midwestern farming, her own Russian Jewish immigrant culture, and the urban life of the working class. Her subject has been "the lives of despised people," but the profound insights and subtleties of class, race, and sex teach readers that no life seen in terms of its emotional and cultural realities should be "despised." Nebraskans will find in her work many aspects of their environment that have been excluded or ignored in other regional literature and history. The radical and feminist perspectives she brings to her portrayal of midwestern lives add an important dimension to our understanding.

Notes

1. Biographical sketches of Olsen have appeared in several places. Deborah Rosenfelt, "From the Thirties: Tillie Olsen and Radical Tradition," *Feminist Studies 7* (Fall 1981), 371-406, includes the most information about her left-wing traditions. Other sources are: *Contemporary Authors: New Revised Series*, ed. Ann Evory, I, 485, and Helen J. Schwartz, in *American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide*, Lina Mainiero, ed., 3 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), pp. 303-305.

2. Both schools were close to her home. Long Elementary School, no longer in existence, was at 26th Street and Franklin. Kellom Elementary still exists at 1311 North 24th Street.

3. Tillie Olsen, *Silences* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978; rpt. Delta/Seymour Lawrence, 1978), p. vii.

4. Rosenfelt, p. 376.

5. Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills*, "Introduction" by Tillie Olsen (Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1972), pp. 157-158.

6. Rosenfelt, p. 376.

7. Julie Zelenka,"Old Neighborhood Stays with Her," Omaha (Nebraska) *World Herald*, August 5, 1980.

8. *World Herald*, August 5, 1980.

9. *Silences*, p. 19.

10. Olsen herself has noted the sexism in the titles of these agencies, writing in *Silences*, "I worked now full time on temporary jobs, a Kelly, a Western Agency girl (girl!) . . ." p. 20.

11. See Rosenfelt, p. 380, for more details about this aspect of Olsen's life.

12. *Contemporary Authors*, p. 485.

13. Olsen's contributions to Women's Studies are widely known. For a useful summary, see Sandy Boucher, "Tillie Olsen: The Weight of Things Unsaid," *Ms.* 3 (September 1974), pp. 26-30.

14. Margaret Atwood, "Obstacle Course" *New York Times Book Review* (July 30, 1978), p. 1.

15. Reviews of *Yonnondio* include Peter Ackroyd, *The Specator* (December 14, 1974), pp. 767-768; John Alfred Avant, *The New Republic* (March 30, 1974), pp. 28-29; Bell Gale Chevigny, *The Village Voice* (May 23, 1974), pp. 38-39; Robert Coles, *The New Republic* (December 6, 1975), p. 30; Annie Gottlieb, *New York Times Book Review* (March 31, 1974), p. 5; and Catherine R. Stimpson, *The Nation* (November 30, 1974), pp. 565-566.

16. Olsen does not mention the city by name after the Holbrooks arrive. Early in the novel Jim says the family may "go to Omaha--get on at the slaughterhouse." Textual details of the streets, bluffs, and packing house area tend to match South Omaha.

17. Rosenfelt, p. 390.

18. Olsen, *Yonnondio: From the Thirties* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1974; rpt. Dell, 1975), p. 7. All subsequent quotations are from this edition.

19. Avant, p. 29.

20. Olsen, *Tell Me a Riddle* (New York: Lippincott, 1961; rpt. Dell, 1976), p. 20. All subsequent quotations are from this source.

21. The setting of "O Yes" is not specified. The story mentions "Horace Mann Elementary" and "Franklin Junior High." Omaha has a Franklin Elementary and a Horace Mann Junior High. However, Horace Mann did not open until 1959, and the date of composition of the story is 1956. "Franklin" and "Horace Mann" are common school names throughout the United States. I wish to thank Dr. Irving Young and Ms. Georgia Westfall at Omaha Public Schools for their help in establishing the history of the Omaha schools which Olsen mentions in her writing.

22. Sally Cunneen, "Tillie Olsen: Storyteller of Working America," *The Christian Century* 97 (May 21, 1980), recalls hearing Olsen discuss the relationship of her mother to the book in a radio broadcast:"Like the grandmother in the story, her mother had been part of a movement to effect change in the Russia of 1905 before she came to this country. Since in that repressive regime religion had allied itself with power, in the name of human possibility and freedom she had become an incorruptible atheist. All her life she had been silent, hardworking, yet--like so many mothers--wise, loving and creative.

"Just before her death, Tillie Olsen's mother had a dream in which someone knocked on her bedroom door. She smelled a marvelous smell, heard a neighing sound, and saw three wise men in gold, blue and crimson robes, embroidered as in her old village. 'We've come to talk to you,' the first one said. When she replied, 'I'm not a believer,' he assured her, 'We don't want to talk about that. We want to talk about wisdom.'

"'Come in,' her mother said. Then she saw that they were women, peasant women as in the old country. (At this point in the program, Tillie Olsen cried, then resumed.) They were worn out, but they had come to worship a universal human infant who was going to be crucified into sex, race and class divisions. In her dream Tillie Olsen's mother joined them in this worship" pp. 573-574.

23. The movie version of *Tell Me a Riddle* alters the fundamantal themes of the novella. While the movie on its own terms is a moving portrayal of the revitalized love between a long married and disputatious couple when the wife faces death, it loses the importance of the betrayed belief which splits the couple in Olsen's work. The movie version is basically an apolitical romantic story of love and reconciliation, not loss and bitterness. As Eva, Lila Kedrova is too pretty and too discreetly ill with cancer to evoke Olsen's thin, vomiting woman who has "not a word" for husband and children.

Olsen has expressed her dissatisfaction at the sentimentalized movie version when she has been questioned about it during her public talks (for example, her Lincoln appearances in April, 1982).

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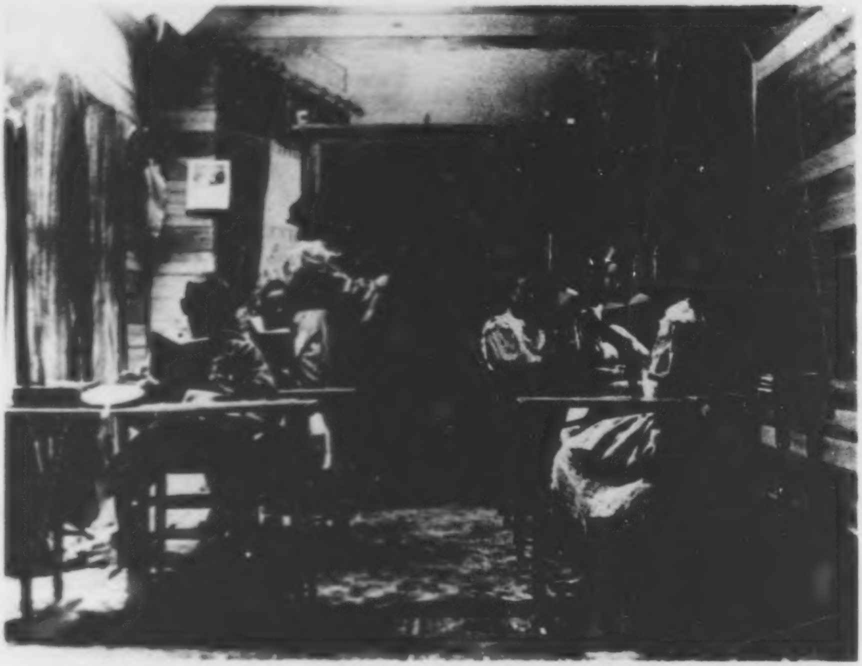
THE COMMUNITY BUILDER



Photographs courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society

THE COMMUNITY BUILDER
Architects of Nebraska

by Sherrill F. Daniels

Sherrill F. Daniels has a pervading interest in reminiscences. She is preparing a bibliography of reminiscences held by the library of the Nebraska State Historical Society where she works. And since its inception, she has worked on the Writing Festival for Older Nebraskans, encouraging Nebraskans to see their own experiences as historical resources.

Western types are familiar to us all from movies, television, and fiction. There is the cowboy. He goes on trail drives, turns stampedes, and sings beautifully. There is the pioneer family, fresh from Sweden or Germany or the wooded hills of Ohio They fight prairie fires, survive blizzards, or alternately, do not survive and are found in the spring. They live in sod houses which are invariably warm in winter and cool in summer. And if someone asks about the community builders, the first examples given are usually economic builders: promoters, like Jules Sandoz, who brought the settlers in, regardless of what he told them, railroad men, bankers, or others who invested--and usually made--money. There are other community builders, people who gave much more.

Examining the lives of communities, one sees the particular points that identify the builder. The Community builder has a background, familial or religious, that stresses involvement in and service to the community. Some continue projects begun by others; sometimes it takes more skill to foster continuing support after the initial burst of enthusiasm. Some develop in their own areas, programs encouraged by their churches. Many builders transplant ideas from their own backgrounds into the fresh soil of their new communities. A community builder usually has either training or experience that gives her skills for implementing her ideas. She also must have both the opportunity and the inclination. Since "opportunity" is often just a more euphonic phrase than "leisure time," women probably outnumber men as community builders. A skeptic might include the observation that community building seldom if ever carries either stipend or title; most of it is volunteer labor.

The achievements of community builders usually fall into three categories: education, social improvement, and aesthetics. Educational programs, originally developed for rural areas, such as 4-H Clubs and Extension Clubs or Home Demonstration Units, depend mostly on volunteer leadership for their success. Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and League of Women Voters are other, better-known examples. Local libraries, historical societies, and Sunday schools are other educational programs that usually began, without building or funds, as volunteer organizations. Community builders concerned with health, safety, and social advantages have organized immunization programs, worked for highway safety, swimming pools, softball leagues, parks, and REA. The aesthetic life of a community particulary a small community, usually arises from that community. Little theatre, community concerts, and local art shows provide opportunities for aesthetic experiences both for the participants and for the audience.

Ironically, even though community builders contribute significantly to the growth and improvement of their areas, they usually are not--in fact, rarely are--the most famous locally. Fame, with billboards that say "Anywhere, Nebraska, Home of ....", is reserved for the native sons and daughters who left and made national or international names for themselves, not for those who remained and made their marks on the community itself.

As communities change or die, the people who worked for their improvement are often forgotten. What follows is an inquiry into the lives and contributions of only two of those women who bloomed where circumstances planted them and a celebration of their accomplishments. While each of them was an individual making her contribution to her community, each is also typical of many, many more of whom we know even less.

Ruth Calkins Oldham

The first of these is Ruth Calkins Oldham. Born 14 February 1850 in Lamont, Illinois, to James and Perris Calkins, parents "of the most sterling type and character" (Brewster *News*, 2 July 1926, 5:2), Ruth Calkins joined the Methodist Church at the age of eight. She attended both public and private schools, concluding with Grand Prairie Seminary and Commercial College in Onarga, Illinois. This co-educational institution, founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1863, offered standard college fare taught in an atmosphere of equal opportunity for all. It boasted classes in languages, natural sciences, commercial science, and vocal music (*Iroquios*, pp. 563-568).

After her education, she taught for several years in Iroquois County, Illinois. At the time of her marriage to Sanford H. Oldham, 17 March 1881, she was teaching in Crescent City, Illinois. So before she came to Nebraska, she had established herself as "a teacher of very high standing . . ." (Letters, p. 4).

Several ideas current during Ruth Oldham's years in Illinois directly or indirectly influenced her contributions to her communities in Nebraska. One was the Victorian ideal of womanhood. If current historians are correct, inventing the idea of "transcendant morality of woman in the home" (Watkins, p. 20) made woman in Victorian society a living symbol of unspoiled goodness. It also separated her private, domestic sphere of influence from the public, materialistic sphere of man. Woman was the keeper of the family honor, the spring of morality, the source of sweetness and light.

Concurrent with the Victorian ideal of womanhood was a rise in the formal education of women. Church-affiliated schools, like the Grand Prairie Seminary Ruth Oldham attended, combined religious and liberal or commercial education. Many of these students themselves became teachers. Implicit in the curriculum was the idea that religious values, the upholding of which the Victorian schema had attributed to women, should be incorporated into one's life. School and community, therefore, were natural extensions of women's responsibilities. Education reinforced even as it enlarged women's roles.

Perhaps the epitome of this combination is the Sunday school. Usually more than singing hymns and memorizing Bible verses, Sunday school was a place for children and adults to learn Christian living and to have fun at the same time. Many Christian denominations forbade or discouraged playing cards, drinking any alcoholic beverage, and dancing; Sunday school played the dual role of providing entertainment and preventing sin. The strength of this disapprobation still shows in slang: someone who cannot dance well has a "Methodist foot."

Sunday school activities could include debates, readings, socials, parlor games. Some of the games came perilously close to dancing, but so long as one called them parlor games, no one seemed to mind. A rose by another name evidently does not smell the same. Oratorios and cantatas were popular, as were picnics and hayrides. The scope, except for expressly forbidden activities, was limited only by the talents and resources of the class members and teachers.

Ruth Oldham came out of this tradition, from "a very fine cultured Christian home with all the conveniences which one living in Illinois could ask" (Letters, p. 3), to

Fillmore County, Nebraska. Her husband, Sanford H. Oldham, a Civil War veteran, was one of the pioneers in Fairmont. As early as February, 1877, his name is included with two other grocers in the Fairmont *Bulletin*. Of his activities in Fairmont little is known. His subsequent posts as Sunday school teacher and superintendent indicate that his interests coincided with and supported his wife's. Because of his support and because so much of their Sunday school work was done in tandem, Ruth Oldham's accomplishments cannot be entirely separated from her husband's.

By June, 1885 the Oldhams lived on Rose Avenue in Fairmont. Fairmont, founded in 1872, had had a resident population of 600 in 1880; it was to reach 1,029 by the census of 1890. Fillmore county in 1885 had a population of 13,542, about the same as Hall, Butler, and Nemaha counties. Mr. Oldham was still a grocer; their daughter, Grace Adalaide, was fifteen months old. Their first child, a son, had died in 1882.

Less than one year later, in April of 1886, the Oldhams homesteaded in Blaine county and moved to the area known as Buffalo Flats. The change in their living conditions was marked. The Oldhams' move was part of "the greatest land boom in the history of the state" (*Conquering*, p. 328). The 1870s and 1880s were the heyday of the sodhouse frontier. From these decades came the stories of homesteading, prairie fires, and blizzards, especially the great blizzard of 1888. They included the grasshopper years of the 70s and the disappearance of most of the open range into 160-acre farms. This was the stuff from which romantic prairie novels are written--though later, and by someone else.

During the period when rainfall was greater than normal, the notion that cultivation had caused the increase sprouted. Much of the land not taken earlier in the homestead period had been passed over because it lacked railroads, real or prospective, trees, and reliable water supplies-good reasons, all. Settlement in other areas had more than repaid efforts, however, so many in the mid 80's took the land previously ignored. Of course cultivation did not increase rainfall, and the good reasons became more apparent as the 80's dwindled into the drought and depression of the 1890's. The dream of any man to plow his own furrow in unbroken prairie, and by determination and unstinting labor to win a farm, a home for his family, began to dry up with the land. Farming methods successful in other parts of the state simply would not work.

Blaine county was not an exception. One of "those small, square, counties" in north central Nebraska, it was not even created out of Sioux County until 1885, when it had a population of 275. The land was settled so rapidly that five years later the population had doubled to 603. Purdum was "town" for much of the area known as Buffalo Flats, which was not confined to Blaine county, but extended into Brown, Thomas, and Cherry counties. Purdum reached its peak population of 36 in 1940. Into this sparsely peopled, unimproved region the Oldhams came from the town of Fairmont.

Most of the information on Ruth Oldham and her contributions to her area is for the early years the Oldhams lived in the Purdum community, 1886-1900. These contributions took several forms, but all of her services grew out of her commitment to education and to nurturing Christian virtues in society. For this reason, one cannot separate the fabric of Mrs. Oldham's life into strands of home, church, school, and community. She seems to have given each the same consideration.

The Oldhams were part of the rapid growth in this new area, and they helped ensure that the institutions they felt important grew rapidly as well. The Methodist Episcopal Church in Purdum was established in 1886; Ruth and Sanford Oldham were among the founding members. One of her former students, Grace Purdum Johnson, wrote, ". . .the first Sunday they were there [Purdum] they helped to organize the Sunday school. . ." (Letters, p. 32).

In addition to the responsibilities of the new Sunday school and of a homesteading wife and mother, under conditions even a contemporary called primitive, Mrs. Oldham returned to teaching. There was a need for teachers. According to Grace Purdum Johnson, who had come to Buffalo Flats in 1882 with her father, George F. Purdum, there was no school at all the first four years. When there were enough children to warrant creating one, the parents met in the Purdum house and formed the Purdum district. After the first term, taught by a young man who had come west because of his lungs, the parents came to Mrs. Oldham, who taught the school for several years. Since her daughter Grace was too young to leave behind, Mrs. Oldham bundled her up and took her along. One winter, she made a room of her home into a schoolroom, and taught there. Homer W. Cox, later minister of the Federated Churches of Sutton, Nebraska, was one of her pupils:

> *Her spirit in the work was very broad. Her skill and tact with young people was very ably brought into play. Teaching, with her, covered everything pertaining to our lives. Manners, morals, book learning and shaping the ideals for life. Opened the school with a scripture reading, and prayer. This was not a matter of form, but done for a great religious uplift.* (Letters, p. 4)

The separation of church and state evidently was not an issue in Purdum.

During the drought and depression of the 1890s, the circumstances of the Oldhams were similar to their neighbors. Little was raised, and because of the distance of their market and the expense of shipping, even less sold. "Here all the hardships which pioneers of that day suffered, they suffered. They were poor. Filed on land, and this was but little value save grazing purposes" (Letters, p. 3).

Hard times did not stop the Sunday school.

> *Her home became the social center for her Sunday school boys and girls. How many times I have had the "Time of my life" in her home. She taught us the spirit of true social- a good time, after which no evil results. Her home was always open to the boys and girls of that community. There has* [sic] *been times when there was no suitable place to have Sunday school so*

> *her home became a public meeting place for such occasions.* (Letters, p. 5)

The Oldhams continued their community service as:

> *The dry years came, people left, the school dwindled down to a few boys and girls of the community and Mr. and Mrs. Oldham. I have seen them drive in the hot summer sun in a lumber wagon, drawn by horses very poor, and at times ropes were used as part of the harness.* (Letters, p. 4)

During this anxious time, Mrs. Oldham also served as the Blaine County Superintendent of Schools for the year 1893-1894. She made ten visits to the schools of the county, driving in a wagon or buggy, and received a total remuneration of $175.00. One assumes that the money was welcome. Her son Morris H. was born in June of 1894.

By 1900, the drought over and the population of the county 1,672, others began to share in the work of the church and school. But for thirteen years, the Oldhams had worked alone.

As one might expect, Mrs. Oldham's work did not pass uncriticized. At least one person felt, years later, that she should have structured her priorities according to the Victorian convention and that her concern for the young people of her community, of which he was one, should not have interfered with her domestic duties. In the midst of a passage appreciating her efforts in the Sunday school he attended, his disapproval shows:

> *Few people realize what a sacrifice Mrs. Oldham made during those days. Her home neglected; much of the work she would have done her husband was impelled to do, and her daughter did not receive the care and attention a mother should have given to ther child.* (Letters, p. 4).

There is an element in this comment that the author may have overlooked. It gives the reader a glimpse of the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Oldham and of his respect for her community work.

After 1900 several changes took place that resulted in the Oldhams' departure from Purdum. On 1 January 1903 Grace Oldham married Samuel H. Teaford in the Oldham home. Teaford had come to the Purdum area as a child about the same time the Oldhams had come. In 1906 Morris Oldham died. In 1911, both over sixty years old, the Oldhams retired. They left their land, no longer a farm but a ranch, in the hands of their daughter and son-in-law and moved to University Place, the Methodist town around Nebraska Wesleyan, now in northeast Lincoln, Nebraska.

Their retirement was not complete. Ruth Oldham became a "mother" to a group of college boys at Wesleyan, and by 1912 both Oldhams were teaching Sunday school classes at "Lancaster," the Nebraska State Penitentiary. Both continued their work there until their death. Ruth Oldham died 19 June 1926; Sanford Oldham died 9 September 1929. Both were buried in Purdum near their son Morris and their daughter Grace, who had died 2 January 1922. The Reverend Homer W. Cox, their former pupil, conducted their services.

The measure of Ruth Oldham's contributions to the building of her community comes from the people who had been under her supervision. For The Reverend Cox, she "had done more toward shaping my life, than any person save my parents" (Letters, p. 3). Grace Purdum Johnson concurs:

> *Mr. and Mrs. Oldham did much in the early days for the young people who grew up there. I always like to give them credit with most of the refinement and better ideals that I was ever able to get outside of my own home. It is a little hard to know how far reaching that sort of thing is.* (Letters, p. 32)

Ruth Oldham brought to Blaine county the combination of education, religion, and culture she had had in her home in Illinois. She offered it to the young people of her community through her roles in public schoolrooms, in church, and in her home. She helped to build the Purdum community in ways important to her. And since she and her husband were the only ones working for the Sunday school in their area, it is understandable that their influence was great, that former students both recognized it and acknowledged their gratitude. But not every community builder occupies a position so clearly delineated. Some, like Minnie Latta Ladd, serve as stewards, receiving responsibilities for projects others have started, upholding and improving them, and passing them on again to others.

Minnie Latta Ladd

Born 12 November 1866 in Rock Bluff, Cass county, Nebraska, to Dr. William Story and Mary Olive Eikenbary Latta, Minnie Latta was descended from two Nebraska pioneer families. Her grandfather, Samuel Eikenbary, was a delegate to the 8th Territorial Legislature and a member of the 1860 Constitutional Committee. Her father's record of community service began in 1859, when he served in the 6th Nebraska Territorial Legislature. During the Civil War, he was Chief Surgeon in the Second Nebraska Cavalry, and while in that position organized the first military hospital in Omaha. His area of responsibility extended from Brownville to the Dakotas. Both a physician and mill owner in Rock Bluff, he had joined lodges there and in Plattsmouth. And by the time he moved his family to Lincoln in 1873 the *Daily State Journal* called him a "gentleman of considerable means."

When the Latta family arrived in Lincoln, they found cultural affairs established. According to Mrs. Ladd's memoirs:

> *Lincoln has always been a fine town in which to raise a family, as it has prided itself from the beginning on its desire for the cultural values of life. The pioneers sought to establish here in a small measure those finer things--art, music, literature, and the drama--which they had enjoyed in their more eastern homes, and which on account of their foresight has immeasurably increased in value*

> *and importance and help to their children . . . In the 70's entertainment was provided largely by the Churches and Lodges, and consisted mainly of lectures, concerts, home talent plays and festivals.* (MLL, p. 21)

Into this cultural life in Lincoln of the 1870's the Lattas plunged. In 1877, when Lincoln was ten years old, the movement to start a free public library began. There was a glee club, the Apollo. Although Dr. Latta was particularly interested in music, he also was a strict Scotch Presbyterian. He did not dance, but he did play the fiddle so that others could.

> *Another of the early memories was of the several singing groups in town. In the Congregational Church, Mr. James Leonard . . . formed a Singing School. Father took us to this gathering before we could touch our feet to the floor. Everyone looked forward to that once a week hour of song.* (MLL, p. 26)

At home Dr. Latta joined with the young people in singing popular songs--on week nights. "Sunday evenings were reserved for the singing of the fine old hymns he loved so well" (NH, 25:234).

Minnie Latta herself was doing more in the social and cultural life of Lincoln than attending Singing School in the Congregational Church. As she remembers:

> *We Presbyterian children were never allowed off the front porch on Sundays, and couldn't read anything but the Sunday school papers. To get a little freedom we joined the Methodist Sunday school which met at four o'clock in the afternoon.* (MLL, p. 30—

As the population of Lincoln grew from 13,003 in 1880 to 55,154 ten years later, the cultural and social clubs burgeoned. There was a dancing club, speaking clubs, poetry, art, reading clubs, and even a formal dining club.

> *In the late 80's and the early 90's many study clubs were formed:- Chatauqua groups, Hall in the Grove, Sorosis, Fortnightly, Athenea and fifty other conscientious study groups. . . Our young people had a Tuesday Evening Club of boys and girls. . . We wrote papers and had discussions of current events, and an annual play. . . Our summer camping trips to Crete were such fun,. . .* (MLL, p. 27)

Two of these literary clubs, Athenea and Fortnightly, were active in 1940 when Minnie Latta Ladd read her memoirs at their meetings in April of that year.

Not all pursuits were educational or culturally oriented. There were informal competitions of less lofty nature.

> *I can remember the rivalry at the Pleasant Hour parties among the young married women over their new dresses, etc. I think Mrs. Coon, a sister of Mrs. A.W. Jensen, another of our talented singers, eclipsed the rest when she came to a party in a pale blue satin dress, with a white satin panel hand painted with pink roses, buds and vines from the edge of the low neck to the hem of her dress. My art teacher had helped with the painting and we were all excited and looking forward eagerly to the triumph.*

> *Gold beads served another chance for rivalry, Mrs. Donny Muir defeating the rest when she came out with a string of solid gold beads each the size of a large pea.* (MLL, pp. 23-24—

In addition to her social activities, Minnie Latta attended the University of Nebraska, graduating in 1887. By birth a Nebraskan, by residence and education a Lincolnite, she settled into the life of the city that was her home for over eighty years. On 28 October 1891 Minnie Latta married Dr. Charles Franklin Ladd, a young dentist, in the First Presbyterian Church of Lincoln. In 1895 the first of their three children, Sarah Avery, was born. Avery Latta followed in 1899; he lived only two months. Their third child, Mary Olive, arrived in 1900.

Also in 1900 the Nebraska Art Association was formed, growing out of the Haydon Art Club. Named for a British painter dedicated to "the educative value of art" (Wells, p. 2), Benjamin Robert Haydon, the Haydon Art Club had been one of the many study clubs created during the 1880's. Founded 3 May 1888 by Miss Sarah Wool Moore, drawing and painting teacher at Nebraska University, and art patrons of the city, it had had high ambitions:

> *To study and prepare papers on art, to form a collection, to acquire a suitable art museum, to encourage young artists, to interest public school children and " 'to attract industry and keep abreast of a growing city.' "* (Wells, p. 1)

Mrs. Ladd's father, Dr. Latta, had joined the club later the same year. And so began her family's association with the organization.

The Haydon Art Club had succeeded in reaching some of its goals by 1900. The first series of papers on art and the first exhibit and the first purchase had been made the founding year. By the turn of the century, it subscribed to art magazines and sponsored a free drawing class (Wells, p. 3). It succeeded so well, in fact, that:

> *during the season of 1900 it became apparent that the Haydon Club had grown to a point where a local organization should be superseded by a state organization, and the old Haydon Art Club was merged into the Nebraska Art Association* (Lincoln *J & S*, 18 Feb. 1940, D:1)

At this time, Dr. and Mrs. Latta and Dr. and Mrs. Ladd are listed as members.

Both Ladds had experience as well as interest in art. As a result of her neighborhood art classes, Minnie Latta Ladd painted. Some of her paintings survive, including a romantic landscape typical of the late 1880's. Dr. Ladd, whose participation in the NAA seems to have been mostly supportive, drew. His autobiography, for example, combines vigorous and detailed sketches with a parody of the style and substance of standard nineteenth-century genealogies and biographies of great men (C.F. Ladd Collection, Nebraska State Archives).

In 1902, shortly after the reorganization, Minnie Latta Ladd began her lengthy contribution to her community of Lincoln through NAA. This new organization expanded the membership base and the scope of activities beyond the limits of the Haydon Art Club; it did not change the goals. Entering the organization in its adolescence, Ladd did not found it;

she did nothing during her sixty years of membership, her thirty years as a trustee, or her four years as its president to change radically the course of it. Instead, Minnie Latta Ladd serves as an example of the community builder who upholds the standards of an organization already formed.

Her work at NAA began with Miss Pierce, Supervisor of Art in the public schools. In 1903-1905 she conducted school children on tours through the NAA gallery, than housed in the auditorium over the old university library, and talked to them about art. She worked on and chaired committees, such as the Reception Committee (1920) and the Membership Committee (1923).

In 1922 Mrs. Ladd became a trustee of NAA, a post she held until 1956. While serving in the elective office of treasurer, in 1929, she became president, appointed by the board after the unexpected death of F.M. Hall. Several important things happened during her tenure as president, 1929-1932. The "living pictures," part of the NAA's annual exhibit for the next thirty years, began in 1929. In 1930 NAA purchased the Grant Wood painting, "Arnold Comes of Age." But it is not through the service as an officer that Ladd made her most significant contribution to Lincoln and to Nebraska. In 1936, in addition to leading tours herself, she became the person in charge of hostesses for the annual art show, a position she held until 1950. It was at this point, the interaction of the public with the art itself, that she made her greatest contribution.

> *When many art association members were students in the university it was Mrs. Ladd who sold season tickets to the show and saw to it that students went. It would be hard to estimate how many school children and students at the university had their first view of painting and sculpture through her efforts.* (Lincoln *J & S*, 11 Nov. 1956, C:2)

Since the stated purpose of NAA is to show the best of modern American art, for each new exhibit she "spent enough time . . . to arrive at some comprehension of what the artists were trying to do" (Lincoln *J & S*, 11 Nov. 1956, C:2). This was not always easy. In 1940, for example, "people in general were baffled by 'Mobile,' as Alexander Calder called his composition in wire and metal" (Lincoln *J & S*, 18 Feb. 1940, D:1).

The significance of one person's contributions to something as extensive and long-lived as the NAA is difficult if not impossible to prove. What one sees is the result of everyone's contributions. Largely at the encouragement of and with substantial gifts from this organization, art in Nebraska, particularly Lincoln, has progressed from neighborhood classes to a College of Arts and Sciences, including a strong Fine Arts program. The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, built on the University of Nebraska campus with private money, was completed in 1963. The Gallery realized another goal of the Haydon Art Club voiced seventy-five years earlier. It was in part made possible through Ladd's sixty years of active participation. Her contribution is also symbolic of the good steward. She joined an organization her parents belonged to and passed her interest on to the community and her family. Her daughter Sarah, Mrs. Thomas C. Woods, who also worked for the NAA, served as president of the organization from 1941-1942.

Minnie Latta Ladd was concerned not only with the cultural growth of Lincolnites and Nebraskans but also with the preservation of past achievements. In 1950 she became historian for NAA, a position which grew naturally out of her years of activity and carefully preserved records. Her memoirs, written in 1940, contain the first history of the organization. Fred N. Wells in *The Nebraska Art Association: A History, 1888-1971* credits her with the "careful preservation of the Art Association recored during its middle years" (Wells, ii). In addition to acting as historian for NAA, Mrs. Ladd also preserved the meticulous records her father had kept during his stint with the Second Cavalry. The Nebraska State Historical Society received these records and photographs of Lincoln as a gift. These photos and her memoirs are important parts of the social history of Lincoln.

Involved in several organizations including the Red Cross, Minnie Latta Ladd was not a mere clubwoman, someone most interested in how many organizations she can belong to, but a member who worked to reach goals. Considering the time and effort she put into her volunteer work, especially art education, it is no wonder that she resented "the false picture of the social conditions of the Middle West that Mari Sandoz in her book, *Capital City*, presented to American reading public" (MLL, p.1) in 1939.

In 1942 her husband, Dr. Ladd, died. She died 17 February 1957 at the age of ninety. An editorial in the Lincoln *Star* called her "a pioneer citizen of this community who contributed much to its cultural, religious and social activities. . .. Many of the young people in Lincoln will remember her in grateful appreciation for the interest she took in them" (*Star*, 19 Feb. 1957, 4:2).

Not every community in Nebraska produces a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, a national league sports figure, or the inventor of Kool-Aid, but every community has its own builders, unique to itself. As in examples shown here, they are not always the most obvious candidates for the title. However, investigation into the history of local landmarks, organizations, churches, and schools will repay the investigators with the identities of many of these people. And it is amidst the achievements of these builders' work, after all, that we live.

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SIRILDA BELVA SPICER

Photograph courtesy of Donna Mays Polk

SIRILDA BELVA SPICER

Educator and Minister

by Marilyn Johnson

Marilyn Johnson, a Lincoln, Nebraska native, earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Nebraska Wesleyan. She has taught in the Lincoln Public Schools for 10 years. This past summer, she designed and implemented a unique program to encourage self-esteem among minority students in the Lincoln Public Schools. Currently, she is the Educational Equity Cadre person for the Lincoln Public School District. She is also a member of Quinn Chapel, A.M.E. Church, the Malone Center Board, and the National Council of Negro Women.

As I visited with Belva Spicer, I thought of writing a poem or finding a quote that spoke of her character. Her life has been so greatly touched by her "divine calling" that it seems it would only be fitting to look to the scripture for the most appropriate tribute.

Sirilda Belva Spicer was born October 4, 1894, in Bedford, Iowa. She was the daughter of Euphemia and Jack Spicer. Euphemia Spicer chose the name Belva because she had such great respect for a national politician at that time by the name of Belva Lockwood. This family included three boys and two girls. In 1909, they moved to Lincoln and made their residence in the College View area. Belva attended high school in Lincoln and was graduated in 1912. Later, she attended the University of Nebraska.

At the University of Nebraska, Belva completed a normal training school program and passed the county teacher's examination, which allowed her to teach. Unfortunately, there was no need for "colored" teachers in Lincoln so she took a job in Cherry County at Brownlee where there were

16 "colored" students.

Belva was so anxious to obtain a teaching position that she failed to ask when pay day was. When she did remember to ask, she found out that school ran for six months and pay day happened to be in April. How miserable! The treasurer of the school district was the superintendent's mother. She offered Belva room and board.

One of Belva's parents sent her the money so she could home at Christmas. Her mother encouraged her sister to return to Cherry County with her so the time would go faster. After teaching in Cherry County, Belva decided to return to the University of Nebraska. At that time, it was thought that "colored girls" were best suited for cleaning jobs, which made Belva very determined to obtain her degree.

When it came time for Belva to do her student teaching, she was told there was no practice teaching for "colored" teachers. Nevertheless, Belva did receive her degree. Earlier, Belva had received a Life Certificate for her successful teaching in Cherry County. Belva also had made some contacts in Kansas City. At one time she had visited a "colored" school there and was encouraged to return after she received her degree. She did return to Kansas City, Kansas, secured a teaching position, and remained in that area for 18 years. She also taught in Sedalia, Missouri for a period of time and received a $30.00 a month paycheck.

Something very strange happened to Belva after she had lived in the Kansas City area for about seven years. She received a call from the "divine," but she chose to ignore it. She did not want to be a minister, but the "caller" remained quite persistent. According to Belva, "the good Lord sent angels after her who kept her awake for many a night, and she suffered a loss of weight and felt she was about to die." For a long time she kept all of this turmoil bottled up inside. Finally, she broke down and asked: "Lord if you want me to go with you, show me another sign?" The sign was quick in coming. According to Belva, she had been experiencing great pain in her feet and the heavenly angels gave her a foot massage she hasn't forgotten. She went immediately to her principal and told of her visions and her plans. She returned to Lincoln in 1941. That spring, she received her Evangelist License.

Belva Spicer became active as a lay preacher in the A.M.E. Church (African Methodist Episcopal). She served in Grand Island for seven years, in North Platte for four years, and in Hastings for two years. Previously, the A.M.E. Church had not ordained women, but down the road things changed. Belva was ordained in Omaha in 1948 at the Annual Conference. She became the first female minister in the A.M.E. Church. Male church leaders did not want women to preach so they discouraged them from seeking theological training. Nevertheless, Belva Spicer was determined to improve her religious training. She went back to school and got her M.A. and then to Cotner School of Religion where she received her B.S. degree in Christian Education in 1951.

Belva Spicer worked in the church until she was almost retirement age, but she decided her mission was not completed. She made a call to a government office in South Dakota and inquired about a job. In order to teach there, she was required to take more college courses since she had not been to school in the past five years. She took 10 hours by extension to requalify herself as a teacher. So in 1956 at the age of 62, Belva Spicer took a slightly different direction in her life. She began teaching Indian children in grade school at Fort Thompson, South Dakota. She was to work until the age of 76. Upon retirement, she was presented a Medal of Honor for her distinguished service by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

According to Belva, her most rewarding experiences in life have been saving souls and teaching children, especially those she taught in South Dakota. Although Belva's days are now filled with listening to music, reading, studying about the saints, and praying, she is still giving of herself. Belva can be characterized as a person who cares about others without reservations and who gives of herself without limitations. She is a member of the Quinn Chapel of A.M.E. Church in Lincoln. She has given this church new pulpit furniture, an organ, and a piano. Recently she also gave the Malone Center Day Care a washer and dryer.

Thinking of Belva Spicer brings to mind a song:

If I can help somebody as I pass along
If I can cheer somebody with a word or song
If I can spread Love's message that the Master taught
Then my living shall not be in vain

Belva Spicer's life on this earth will certainly allow her to rejoice in time to come.

These two verses are taken from Proverbs Chapter 31; verses 25 and 26.

25--Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come
26--She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

WILLA CATHER

Photograph courtesy of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society

WILLA CATHER
Living History

by Susan J. Rosowski

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A central element in Willa Cather's writing is her use of time. Unlike her use of place, which has had a long and healthy debate leading to the view today that she yoked regional details to universal themes, critics have seldom argued about Cather's use of time. She clearly stated her respect for the past, and critics have tended to read her works accordingly as backward looking in perspective, elegiac in tone, and remote in subject matter. I propose a different approach: to ask not whether Cather felt the pull of the past (clearly she did), but what responses she took to that pull and what she offers to the reader today.

Cather's sense of time was shaped by her childhood experience of moving with her family from the East to the still open plains of the Midwest. Coming from Virginia to Nebraska in 1883, when she was nine, Cather "felt a good deal as if we had come to the end of everything—it was a kind of erasure of personality."[1] The experience of dislocation was so severe she recalled it as having been "jerked away from [woods and hills and meadows] and thrown out into a country as bare as a sheet of iron." Cather's comfort lay in visiting her neighbors, old immigrant women who taught Cather her first—and perhaps most important—lessons in history: "these old women on the farm were the first people who ever gave me the feeling of an older world across the sea. Even when they spoke very little English, the old women somehow managed to tell me a great many stories about the old country." From them, Cather gathered her own tales from the prairie: "I have never found any intellectual excitement more intense than I used to feel when I spent a morning with one of those old women at her baking or butter making. I used to ride home in the most unreasonable state of excitement; I always felt as if they told me so much more than they said—as if I had actually got inside another person's skin."

This description anticipates the historical sense Cather infused into her fiction, which involves a personal revelation of an older world to which one belongs. Unlike Cather's oft-quoted romantic revelations in which the individual transcends time and experiences eternity, these are revelations about immortality that occur within time, but time that encompasses all of human consciousness. Revelations about immortality occur when the individual expands her sense of time from her own life span to a human community that reaches forward from the Stone Age, encompasses the individual, and continues forward, to time yet unrealized. This human community is similar to what Hannah Arendt would later call "the common world":

> *... the common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die. It transcends our life span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only with those who live with us, but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after us.*[2]

For Cather, history begins with the human record, as when in *O Pioneers!* Alexandra Bergson looks toward the wild Nebraska plains "with love and yearning," the land responds, and the narrator comments, "the history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman."[3] And it involves a story—action converted into myth that expresses human aspirations. Cather's novels reveal her working out of these premises. Following *O Pioneers!*, Cather turned to the individual's need to find himself after "the splendid story of the pioneers is finished, and ... no new story worthy to take its place has yet begun."[4] Her books contain a series of revelations as characters enter this large human community. In *The Song of the Lark*, Thea Kronborg recognizes cliff-houses painted on a bowl found in a long-abandoned Indian cliff dwelling and realizes those long-dead peoples "saw their houses exactly as she saw them" and that she belonged "to a long chain of human endeavour."[5] In *My Ántonia* Jim Burden, recalling the immigrant girls in his childhood, had a revelation of "the relation between girls like those and the poetry of

Virgil"[6] and of his own kinship with Virgil. In *The Professor's House*, Tom Outland discovers a long-deserted Cliff City that holds his "country's secrets" meant for "boys . . . that have no other ancestors to inherit from."[7] When he and his friend come upon "one of the original inhabitants" (p. 214), the dried human body of a woman, they call her Mother Eve, the first in the human family to which they belong. In the late *Shadows on the Rock*, Cecile comes of age when she realizes her part in the tradition of domestic rituals she learned from her mother. In each story, the individual "comes home" to herself or himself by recognizing her or his place in history.

The forms Cather used were ones that expressed this personal sense of history. Cather traced her own artistic development to the Old World stories that eased her childhood loneliness. She knew she "hit the home pasture" when she drew upon those stories for the content—and method—of her art. In her essay, "My First Novels [There Were Two]," Cather compared her 1911 novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, to a "studio picture" in which she followed "the most conventional pattern" and from which she recovered when she wrote her next book. For *O Pioneers!* Cather drew upon her memories of "old neighbours, once very dear, whom I had almost forgotten in the hurry and excitement of growing up . . . ."[8] The story is of Alexandra Bergson, a Swedish girl who came with her family to homestead in Nebraska, then after her father died took over the management of their land and developed it into a prosperous farm. The force of the book lies not in its narrative (Cather called it "a slow-moving story, without 'action,' without 'humor,' without a 'hero' ") but instead in its ability to catch the living history that is embodied in the daily lives of a people. Cather recalled writing the book as a natural process in which there was "no arranging or 'inventing'; everything was spontaneous and took its own place, right or wrong."[9] And here we come to the style of the book-the relaxed manner of a personal memoir, recalling voices from the past. The immigrants themselves provide such voices, certainly, but so do objects that tell their own stories: a book of old Swedish songs or a recipe carried to America from the Old World—people, relics, and rituals that enable us to enter imaginatively into the spirit of the past, recognize its similarity to ourselves, and realize how we are its heirs.

Mr. Bergson's walnut secretary is such an object. Sitting at it, the adult Alexandra recalls her father's homesickness, and by her recollection conveys a picture of the homesickness of all immigrants: "It was one of the first things he bought for the old log house. It was a great extravagance in those days. But he wrote a great many letters back to the old country. He had many friends there, and they wrote to him up to the time he died . . . . I can see him now, sitting there on Sundays, in his white shirt, writing pages and pages, so carefully" (p. 236). Other objects evoke other stories. The apple trees in Marie Shabata's orchard draw forth

Carl's story of planting them when he was a child, then carrying water to them: the story conveys a picture of the immigrants' struggle to convert the empty plains into productive farmland. A branch from an apricot tree recalls to Alexandra and Carl the time the circus came to town and, lacking enough money for admission, they purchased apricots, the first they had ever tasted, then planted the seeds. The recollection embodies the immigrants' hardships as well as the pleasures they found in spite of them. The book is filled with such details—unobtrusive objects so much a part of daily living that one scarcely notices they are the means by which the past infuses the present: Mrs. Lee wears "a crocheted collar, fastened with a big pale gold pin, containing faded daguerreotypes of her father and mother" (pp. 190-191); Amedee's newborn son sleeps in "the old cradle that had been Amédée's" (p. 241); and Marie bakes kolache, "delicate little rolls, stuffed with stewed apricots, and [dusted] with powdered sugar" (p. 194), as did her Bohemian ancestors.

O Pioneers! is a lyric celebration of a past that blends naturally into the present. But even in this early book, Cather presented the danger of encroaching materialism: Alexandra's brothers and their wives, ashamed of being "different," carelessly discard the old and indiscriminately embrace the new. And Cather included also the loneliness of individuals who have cut themselves off from their roots. Carl Linstrum, Alexandra's childhood friend and future husband, returns to the homestead his family had left years ago, questioning the American ideal of leaving one's past behind: "'Freedom so often means that one isn't needed anywhere. Here you are an individual, you have a background of your own, you would be missed. But off there in the cities there are thousands of rolling stones like me. We are all alike; we have no ties, we know nobody, we own nothing.... We have no house, no place, no people of our own'" (pp. 122-123).

Beginning with her next novel, *The Song of the Lark,* Cather created characters who must struggle to retrieve a personal history from the past. Though gifted, Thea Kronborg is without direction until she visits long-abandoned Indian cliff dwellings in the Southwest and finds there "half a bowl with a broad band of white cliff-houses painted on a black ground." The bowl speaks to her from the past, and she realizes her similarities to the artists of that long-dead people: "it brought her centuries nearer to these people to find that they saw their houses exactly as she saw them" (p. 380). By creating a bowl and decorating it with art, "the Cliff-Dwellers had lengthened her past" (p. 383) and likened Thea to them: "in their own way, those people had felt the beginnings of what was to come. Those potsherds were like fetters that bound one to a long chain of human endeavour" (p. 380). For Thea, the result is a sense of her own mission in art.

The character in *The Song of the Lark* who turns to the past for identity will appear in Cather's next novel; its method will not, however, for Cather realized the conventionally detailed narrative line was unsuited for her. In *My Ántonia*, Cather returned to storytelling in the manner of her childhood. Her narrative joins fact and fiction, past and present, as announced in an introduction, in which Cather appears as herself, a writer who spent her childhood in Nebraska, then moved to New York. While on a train passing through the Midwest, she met Jim Burden, an old friend with whom she grew up "in the same Nebraska town." The extended train ride provides leisure for casual talk, guided not by a fictional narrative line but by emotion. As they reminisce, their talk keeps returning to Ántonia Shimerda, a Bohemian girl they once knew. Some months later, Jim calls on Cather at her New York apartment, bringing what he had written of Ántonia and saying, "I didn't take time to arrange it; I simply wrote down pretty much all that her name recalls to me. I suppose it hasn't any form."

The book does have a form, of course. It is the form of a living history passed along by generations of storytellers. Jim Burden's account consists of his personal experiences, but also of stories passed to him from his grandmother, from Ántonia, from his grandparents' hired hands, from the hired girls, and from Mrs. Steavens, the midwife who attended Antonia. Thus objective history, myth, legend, and gossip blend until the story resembles the Burdens' Christmas tree that, like "the talking tree of the fairy tale [had] legends and stories nestled like birds in its branches" (p. 83). The timelessness of legend infuses the present; personal experience informs history.

The overall effect is of a succession of storytellers who draw the past into the present and merge fiction with fact. As a child in the old country, Ántonia recalls, she would sit under a table and listen to her father talk with his friend; in America, Ántonia tells stories to the young Jim Burden, who will later tell them to Cather, who in turn passes them to the reader. Here as elsewhere Cather embeds such stories in ongoing human life, suggested by the smells of food baking and the breathing sounds of the human voice:

> *While we sat in the kitchen waiting for the cookies to bake or the taffy to cool, Nina used to coax Ántonia to tell her stories—about the calf that broke its leg, or how Yulka saved her little turkeys from drowning in the freshet, or about old Christmases and weddings in Bohemia. Nina interpreted the stories about the crêche fancifully, and in spite of our derision she cherished a belief that Christ was born in Bohemia a short time before the Shimerdas left that country. We all liked Tony's stories. Her voice had a peculiarly engaging quality; it was deep, a little husky, and one always heard the breath vibrating behind it. Everything she said seemed to come right out of her heart.* (p. 176)

With a sense of the past as active comes a similarly active critical judgment. Through Cather's writing there runs opposition to history as a body of knowledge obtained by an objective accumulation of data. Cather stressed not what happened so much as what the past meant to those who lived in it, and she deeply distrusted history that omitted this human dimension. On a picnic with the hired girls, Jim Burden muses on the story of Coronado, opposing her personal sense of history to the academic version:

> *At school we were taught that he had not got so far north as Nebraska, but had given up his quest and turned back somewhere in Kansas. But Charley Harling and I had a strong belief that he had been along this very river. A farmer in the country north of ours, when he was breaking sod, had turned up a metal stirrup of fine workmanship, and a sword with a Spanish inscription on the blade.... Father Kelly, the priest, had found the name of the Spanish maker on the sword and an abbreviation that stood for the city of Cordova. "And that I saw with my own eyes," Ántonia put in triumphantly. "So Jim and Charley were right, and the teachers were wrong!" The girls began to wonder among themselves. Why had the Spaniards come so far? What must this country have been like, then? Why had Coronado never gone back to Spain, to his riches and his castles and his king? I couldn't tell them. I only knew the schoolbooks said he "died in the wilderness, of a broken heart."* (pp. 243-244)

By the conclusion of *My Ántonia*, the reader is able to answer these questions about the pioneers to the American Midwest: "Why had [they] come so far? What must this country have been like, then? Why had [they] never gone back...?"

Cather's next novels—*One of Ours* (1922), *A Lost Lady* (1923), *The Professor's House* (1925), and *My Mortal Enemy* (1926)—deal with collisions between different times and cultures, and an ensuing disruption so complete that the past is left behind. Though not a historical novel, *One of Ours* is about the uses of history and the tragedy of a life cut off from its past. It was published in 1922, the year Cather identified as that point at which "the world broke in two," with "yesterday's seven thousand years" sliding into a remote past.[10] The central problem of the book is the human dilemma that results from this breaking.

One of Ours consists of two major parts—the first set in America, the second in France, and the two joined by a ship's crossing. The American scenes present a country dangerously careless of its heritage. Claude Wheeler, a sensitive boy coming of age, has been reared in a family—and a country—deeply ignorant of and antagonistic to its place in history. Claude's father asserts, "'I don't have to explain the market. I've only got to take advantage of it'";[11] his older brother, Bayliss, is "a narrow gauge fellow" and "a virulent Prohibitionist" who "would have liked to regulate everybody's diet by his own feeble constitution" (pp. 7-8); his younger brother, Ralph, devotes himself to a never-ending progression of useless machines in an effort "to keep up with the bristling march of invention" (p. 18). Even his mother, to whom Claude is close, views history through blinders: "According to her conception of education, one should learn, not think; and above all, one must not enquire. The history of the human race, as it lay behind one, was already explained; and so was its destiny, which lay before. The mind should remain obediently within the theological concept of history" (p. 25).

Only Mahailey, the Wheeler's slow-witted servant, acts as a custodian of the past. When she came to Nebraska, Mahailey brought with her household goods that convey the rich personal history of her people: "three patchwork quilts, interlined with wool off the backs of Virginia sheep, washed and carded by hand. The quilts had been made by her old mother, and given to her for a marriage portion" (p. 72). Mahailey values objects not because of their utilitarian value or because of the momentary diversion they provide, but because of the stories they tell. A kitchen table leg that became wobbly, a broken rolling pin handle, and a favorite butcher-knife, "after they had been mended, acquired a new value in her eyes, and she liked to work with them" (p.22). But Mahailey seems a relic of the past, and in the end, she is unable to protect that which she values. Though she is outraged, she cannot prevent Ralph from carrying off the linen she had cared for over the years, and her prize quilt seems to disappear once she gives it to Claude. Most important, although she loves Claude, she cannot prevent his being disillusioned in America, then killed in France.

Once Cather has placed Claude in his American context, she sets him on a quest for some purpose to his life. Dissatisfied with the banalities of the small church college he attends, Claude matriculates at State University for special work in European history. Claude needs a past that will make the present meaningful, and he seems to find it in his history course: "for the first time he was studying a subject which seemed to him vital, which had to do with events and ideas, instead of lexicons and grammars" (p. 37). But here, too, Claude is frustrated, not by the subject but by his approach to it. For his class paper, Claude writes on Joan of Arc as told to him by his mother, "one day when he was a little boy. He had been shut up in the house with a cold, he remembered, and he found a picture of her in armour, in an old book, and took it down to the kitchen where his mother was making apple pies. She glanced at the picture, and while she went on rolling out the dough and fitting it to the pans, she told him the story" (p. 62.) As always for Cather, it is the living figure that is important: "He had forgotten what she said,—it must have been very fragmentary,—but from that time on he knew the essential facts about Joan of Arc, and she was a living figure in his mind" (p. 62). In his university work, however, Claude's attempts to be objective and scientific lead only to disappointment, for "after all his conscientious study he really knew very little more about the Maid of Orleans than when he first heard of her from his mother..." (p. 62).

The incident illustrates the tension Cather develops throughout *One of Ours* between two fundamentally different kinds of history. One is the people's history expressed by Mahailey's quilts and by Mrs. Erlich's German Christmas cakes made by "the almost holy traditions that governed this complicated cookery" and that carried with them "the fragrance of old friendships, the glow of early memories, belief in wonder-working rhymes and songs" (p. 45). In opposition to this personal, folk history is academic, official history to which Claude turns when he reads in the university library about Joan of Arc and when he reads in the encyclopedia about France. Claude's dilemma is that he has no personal historical identity with which to evaluate official accounts, and he remains painfully, dangerously uncritical. Unable to forge a connection between his own life and the accounts he reads, he cannot evaluate them, as Jim Burden did when he refuted textbook versions of Coronado's travels into North America. Instead, Claude ignores the voices about him—Ernest Havel's speaking of the complexities in France's war with Germany and even his own experience of kindness in his German neighbors—and accepts the most sweeping political propaganda that groups all Germans as bloodthirsty Huns. Heightening this tension, events leading to World War I bring with them "warning that an *unprecedented* power of destruction had broken loose in the world" (my emphasis). Cather catches well the confusion—and horror—of a present for which the past does not prepare one. There is a vague, general sense that "something new, and certainly evil, was at work among mankind," but "nobody was ready with a name for it. None of the well-worn words descriptive of human behavior seemed adequate" for new powers horrifying in their impersonality (pp. 167-168).

Claude's response is to embrace the illusion of a future without a past. Enlisting, he sails for France, thinking "history had condescended to such as he; this whole brilliant adventure had become the day's work" (p. 312). He revels in the fog through which his troop's ship sails, mistaking his blindness for unbounded opportunity: "This fog which had been at first depressing had become a shelter; a tent moving through space, hiding one from all that had been before, giving one a chance to correct one's ideas about life and to plan the future. The past was physically cut off; that was his illusion" (p. 304). But the person who has no past acts at great risk. Claude, untutored in French language and customs, proceeds from comedy, as when he sits solemnly in one church, believing he is in another, to tragedy, when he is killed defending a bit of land called the Boar's Snout. The novel's irony is that Claude's premature death was fortunate, for his belief in a glorious cause would have been followed by "desolating disappointment" (p. 458).

A Lost Lady, The Professor's House, and *My Mortal Enemy* develop further the tension of worlds breaking apart and the plight of individuals for whom the past provides no guide to the future. In *A Lost Lady*, Marian Forrester, a generation younger than her pioneering, road-building husband, Captain Forrester, struggles desperately during his decline and after his death. Without the old order, her alternatives are to immolate herself on the funeral pyre of the past or to make her way in the new world of shallow materialism. *My Mortal Enemy* too deals with the fall of an old order and the rise of a shoddy new one, but here Cather stressed her character's personal ancestry. Myra Driscoll marries in careless defiance of her inheritance, most obviously that of wealth and position, but also of character. As a result, she has nothing with which she can insulate herself against social changes. The novel's irony is that she cannot cut herself off from the past, for it continues as a "strain of blood" she carries within herself. As she grows older, she comes closer to the uncle she once defied:

> *We were very proud of each other, and if he'd lived till now, I'd go back to ask him and ask his pardon . . . because as we grow old we become more and more the stuff our forebears put into us. I can feel his savagery strengthen in me. We think we are so individual and so misunderstood when we are young; but the nature our strain of blood carries is inside there, waiting, like our skeleton.*[12]

In *The Professor's House* Godfrey St. Peter is a historian who uses history as a refuge from the present. Work on his book, *Spanish Adventurers in North America* in eight volumes, brought to him great personal satisfaction and public recognition, but he conducted this work in an increasingly inhuman isolation. The idea of a past separated from the present runs through *The Professor's House*, and the dangers of separation are evident. St. Peter seems entombed in his study retreat, where he remains after his family moved to a new house. His isolation resembles that of the Indian people whose long-abandoned Cliff City was discovered by the professor's student, Tom Outland. These were a people who developed an aesthetic culture in their apparently secure isolation, but who become vulnerable as a result, unable to descend from their mesa, and who eventually died at the hands of Plains Indians.

Like her professor, Cather turned to the distant past for her last books: to the second half of the nineteenth century in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*; to the late seventeenth century for *Shadows on the Rock*; and to the mid-nineteenth century for *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Because they deal with historical subjects in a remote past, these novels are classified as historical fiction, and critics usually discuss them as such. Yet this classification should not obscure two facts. First, historical thinking runs through Cather's writing. *O Pioneers!, My Ántonia*, and *A Lost Lady* are included in discussions of historical fiction,[13] and almost all Cather's works belong in significant respects to that classification: they are "deliberate responses to a specific history, and to the writer's sense of pressure, of dilemma, in the present" and they "look to the past for evidence of typical human behavior and for an explanation of the present."[14] Second, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*—the book usually classified most firmly under the "historical fiction" heading—is in significant respects the book in which Cather most avoids "the question of social change" that is at the heart of the historical novel.[15]

Changes in attitudes about history are basic to any discussion of historical fiction. In 1814, the year of Napoleon's fall, Scott's *Waverly* began the vogue of the historical novel. Previous uses of history reflected the general assumption of unalterable human nature: the action and characterization were contemporary to the author, overlaid with the trappings of the past in the form of settings and costumes. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is an example, in which costumery is used not to present certain historical circumstances that shape individuals' lives but to create a mood of brooding, sinister mystery. With changes surrounding the French Revolution, our attitude toward time was altered radically, and a modern sense of history emerged—of a peculiar time and set of circumstances shaping the individuality, character, and psychology of those touched by them. The difference is illustrated by comparing eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century novelists. Fielding provided a background of social realism for *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, but his characters are not primarily shaped by social events. Instead, they pass through their social context, then emerge as true to type. Eliot, on the other hand, presents her characters as inextricably a part of their times, their lives shaped by specific social events and forces.[16]

Certainly *Death Comes for the Archbishop* fulfills many of the usual criteria for the historical novel: it is set in a remote past, it spans a specific historical time, and it deals with historical people (Fathers Machebeuf and Lamy, as presented in William Howlett's *The Life of the Right Reverend Joseph P. Machebeuf,* are prototypes for Fathers Vaillant and Latour). Cather follows Latour's life from the time he entered the Southwest as a young priest in 1851 until his death in 1889, and she arranges his experiences in historical order: early episodes involve ancient Indian rituals; later ones Mexican religion and culture; still later ones Spanish American culture. At the end of his life, Latour reflects, "Yes, he had come with the buffalo, and he had lived to see railway trains running into Santa Fé. He had accomplished an historic period."[17] (p. 273).

Despite these evidences of a modern historical treatment, however, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* conveys a truth that is radically opposed to the cause-effect assumptions behind modern history.

Cather wrote the book in the style of legend, in which "it is as though all human experiences, measured against one supreme spiritual experience, were of about the same importance."[18] In it, Cather stressed constancy rather than change, and she minimized the historical peculiarities of social conditions and the influence of those circumstances upon the lives of individuals. As Latour recognized, despite apparent changes, "his diocese changed little except in boundaries. The Mexicans were always Mexicans, the Indians were always Indians. Santa Fé was a quiet backwater, with no natural wealth, no importance commercially" (p. 286). For her central characters Cather took historical persons and developed them not as individuals but as agents representing ideas. Latour is spirituality, culture, contemplation; Vaillant is physicality, provincialism, action. Even their weaknesses are excesses of dominant traits rather than contraries: Latour's coldness and doubt are of his spiritual nature; Vaillant's heat and rashness are of his physical nature. Together the two major characters form one life story. Cather wrote of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as "the life story" of "the two Bishops,"[19] a singular life story expressed by two contrasting but complementary priests. Similarly, Cather uses an allegorical manner to present secondary characters, each of whom offers an example of some quality of human nature. Father Martinez is carnal lust; Father Lucero is miserliness, Friar Baltazar is gluttony; Dona Isabella is childish vanity. As Father Latour recognized, "each of these men not only had a story, but seemed to have become his story" (p. 183).

As in a picaresque tale, episodes are loosely connected by the travels of the two priests. But unlike most picaresque tales, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* seems unified—not by cause-effect relationships in time but by the "magical causation" of doubling.[20] Doubling is evident first in the book's central characters, Fathers Latour and Vaillant. Despite their different natures, the two priests are linked so fully they seem as one. Cather uses twinning imagery to join them: their similar clothing, their common history, language, culture; their union in rituals of praying, eating, and working; their matching white mules. From them, Cather extends doubling by analogy. Bishop Latour recognizes God's work in the form of similes. He recognizes that apparently alien forms participate in Christian fellowship: the juniper is shaped like a cross; smoke of burning pinon logs rises "like incense to Heaven"; the noxious datura produces blossoms like Easter lilies; the rock of Acoma is like a physical form of Christ's metaphor; the great plain glistening in the rain is like "the first Creation morning" (p.99). Gradually, the reader realizes that doubling permeates the book. The earth mirrors the sky, for "every mesa was duplicated by a cloud mesa, like a reflection" (p. 96); "the people mirror the land—traveling with Eusabio was like traveling with the landscape made human" (p. 232); and people mirror one another. Latour and Jacinto are joined in their good manners; the Bishop and Kit Carson are joined in a common noble nature, as are Eusabio and Latour. Most important, Latour's "priest's life [is] like his Master's" (p. 256).

The overall effect is on the timeless fellowship of all things joined by their common divine heritage rather than of individuals shaped by circumstances. There is nothing in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* even remotely similar to Antonia's masculinization during the necessary backbreaking labor of taming the land, or of Marian Forrester's desperate struggle to survive in a new age after the death of her husband. And most significantly, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* evokes acceptance rather than the personal judgment that led Jim Burden to defy textbook accounts of Coronado's excursion into North America.

In her next book, *Shadows on the Rock,* Cather turned to an even more distant past, that of the late seventeenth century. For her fictional characters, she created an apothecary, Euclide Auclair; his daughter, Cecile, who manages their house following the death of her mother; and their neighbors. These characters appear against a backdrop dominated by the historical figures Count Frontenac, for whom Cather drew upon the American historian Parkman's account, and Bishop Laval, for whom she turned to the *Jesuit Relations.* With this cast, Cather emphasized not how individuals are shaped by a peculiar time and set of circumstances but instead how people can protect themselves against social events. Coming to settle on the rock of Quebec, immigrants faced apparently overwhelming powers of annihilation: the Old World they left had become barbaric, with its upper classes devoted to frivolous pleasures while its lower classes and poor starved. The New World is similarly threatening and barbaric, with its black forests and bitter cold. The French immigrants protect themselves by carrying their history with them: "When an adventurer carries his gods with him into a remote and savage country, the colony he founds will, from the beginning, have graces, traditions, riches of the mind and spirit. Its history will shine with bright incidents, slight, perhaps, but precious, as in life itself, where the great matters are often as worthless as astronomical distances, and the trifles dear as the heart's blood."[21] These "trifles," the daily details by which a culture endures, form the fabric of the novel. *Shadows on the Rock* is a book of rituals, formulas, brews, and rites: in the home those of Cecile caring for the family's linen and tending her stove; in the church, those of the Old Bishop calling his people to worship; in the apothocary shop, those of Euclide Auclair healing his patients. Together, they provide a constancy that accounts for the serene mood of the book, by which "the rock of Quebec is not only a stronghold on which many strange figures have for a little while cast a shadow in the sun; it is the curious endurance of a kind of culture, narrow but definite. There another age persists."[22]

After writing *Lucy Gayheart,* a lesser book in which Cather once again drew upon her Nebraska memories, Cather turned for her last novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl,* to her earliest memories of Virginia and to stories that went back to the time her grandparents were young. Again Cather presents the past moving forward, increasingly at odds with a changing world. But there is a difference. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock,* Cather had created characters who protected the best of the past and used it to steady themselves against change. In *Sapphira and the Slave Girl,* she looks at the reverse side of the same idea to consider the burdens of the past.

As the title suggests, the book concerns slavery, the darkest feature in American history. Sapphira Dodderidge, a descendent of an old, wealthy, slave-owning family, married an immigrant's grandson, Henry Colbert, and moved from her family's aristocratic society of Loudon County to a mill farm in the Black Creek Valley. As Fathers Latour and Vaillant and the Auclairs carried with them objects from the past, so Sapphira brings her twenty slaves to her new home. This general situation of conflict is made specific with the story's action, which concerns Sapphira's treatment of her slave girl, Nancy, of whom she has become irrationally suspicious. Sapphira plots to ruin Nancy, inviting her husband's womanizing cousin, Martin Colbert, to visit, then ordering the girl to care for his bedroom. With this action, Cather makes the historical fact of slavery both human and personal, then presents various characters' responses to it. In her person as in her attitudes and actions, Sapphira suggests the burden of the past: she suffers from dropsy, and her bloated body seems a physical image of her retaining old Southern attitudes. Henry Colbert, her husband, is sensitive to the injustice of slavery but withdraws from personal responsibility. Though troubled by the general question of slavery, he follows the most literal readings of Scripture; in response to the specific issue of his wife's actions against Nancy, he again refuses to act, instead arranging to leave money in the pocket of his coat, which he leaves hanging near an open window the night Nancy escapes. In helping Nancy reach freedom, Rachel Blake, Sapphira and Henry's daughter, combines the best qualities of both parents, her mother's courage and her father's moral sensitivity.

As with her previous uses of history, Cather is unconcerned about the facts in themselves (indeed, she misdates the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law), and instead focuses on history as it is lived. Sapphira is an intriguingly complex product of her culture, a slaveowner for whom slavery is a fact of life, neither good nor evil in itself. Her treatment of her slaves defies a pat description: she is sometimes kind, sometimes cruel, sometimes indifferent. It is only when Cather further personalizes the story to the specific action of Sapphira's mistreatment of Nancy that there is a clear-cut moral issue, and even so, Cather presents with real sympathy characters who are unable to intervene: Henry Colbert, for example, and Old Till, Nancy's mother. Rachel Blake is courageous not simply in her willingness to act but in her efforts to understand her complex attitudes toward her mother and the society of which she is a part. Thus the setting and time of the story—the South in 1857—combined with its concern with slavery, may seem remote; but the characters are so fully drawn they break out of that remote past.

In other ways, too, Cather draws the past forward. She appears in the story as herself when she was a young child, thereby using her own life to span the "distant" past of 1857 and the modern age. Cather drew the central episode from her own past, as she experienced it and as it was passed down in family tales. When Cather was five and living at Willow Shade, Virginia, she saw Nancy Till return from Montreal, to be reunited with her mother, Old Till. Nancy and Till appear as themselves in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Cather's own ancestors appear also: her great grandparents were the prototypes for Sapphira and Henry Colbert, and her grandmother, Rachel Boak, as the prototype for Rachel Blake. As James Woodress writes, "It all happened just as she told it, and it was the most exciting event of her life up to that time. Nancy had already become a legend, and Mrs. Cather often had sung her daughter to sleep with: '*Down by de cane-brake, close by de mill,/ Der lived a yaller gal, her name was Nancy Till.*' "[23] Years later, recalling Nancy's reunion with her mother, Cather wrote, "There was something Scriptural in that meeting, like the pictures in our old Bible."[24] Fact informs fiction; experience blends with legend, song, and Scripture.

Finally, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* brings us back to the question with which this essay began. How does Cather treat time, especially the past? And what does Cather offer to the reader today? For Cather, it is a living history of a people that makes the past personal, continuous, and accessible. Such a history exists not in textbooks but in the rituals we engage in, the objectives we live with, and the stories we tell. Her sense of history is subjective and involved. It leads to certain personal questions: What did this experience mean to those who figured in it? In what essential ways do I resemble them? What does their history mean to me, as their heirs? What is my place in the large human community of which I am a part? What questions do I wish to pose of those who lived before me—and where might I go for answers to those questions?

NOTES

1. From an interview published in the *Special Correspondence of the* [*Philadelphia*] *Record*, New York, August 9, 1913; reprinted in *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements 1893-1896* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 448. Other quotations in this paragraph are from this interview.

2. *The Common World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 55.

3. *O Pioneers!* (Sentry Edition; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 65. Hereafter references to *O Pioneers!* will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

4. "Nebraska," in *Further Adventures in Essay Reading*, ed. Thomas E. Rankin and others (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1928), p. 75. This essay is reprinted in *Roundup: A Nebraska Reader*, ed. Virginia Faulkner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1957).

5. *The Song of the Lark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937), p. 380. Hereafter references to *The Song of the Lark* will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

6. *My Ántonia* (Sentry Edition; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 270. Hereafter references to *My Ántonia* will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

7. *The Professor's House* (Vintage Edition; New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 242-244. Hereafter references to *The Professor's House* will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

8. "My First Novels [There Were Two]," in *Willa Cather on Writing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), pp. 91-94.

9. "My First Novels [There Were Two]," in *Willa Cather on Writing*, p. 92.

10. "Prefatory Note," in *Not Under Forty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), n.p.

11. *One of Ours* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 160. Hereafter references to *One of Ours* will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

12. *My Mortal Enemy* (Vintage Edition; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 82.

13. Ernest E. Leisy includes all three in *The American Historical Novel*, along with *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *Shadows on the Rock*, and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950).

14. From "Foreword" by Alan Trachtenberg, to *Versions of the Past: The Historical Imagination in American Fiction*, by Harry B. Henderson III (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

15. Henderson, p. 13. In "Willa Cather and History," James Woodress discusses *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as a historical romance, *Arizona Quarterly* 34 (Autumn 1978), pp. 239-254.

16. For a classic introduction to the historical novel, see Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, translated from the German by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962), especially Chapter 1, "The Classical Form of the Historical Novel."

17. "On *Death Comes for the Archbishop*," in *Willa Cather on Writing*, p. 9.

18. "On *Death Comes for the Archbishop*," in *Willa Cather on Writing*, p. 12.

19. The term "magical causation" is from "Allegorical Causation: Magic and Ritual Forms," in *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, by Angus Fletcher (Ithaca, New York:

Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 181 ff.

20. *Shadows on the Rock* (Vintage Edition; New York: Random House, 1971), p. 98.

21. "On *Shadows on the Rock*," in *Willa Cather on Writing*, p. 15.

22. James Woodress, *Willa Cather: Her Life and Art* (1970; Bison Book, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 26.

23. Quoted by Woodress, *Willa Cather: Her Life and Art*, p. 26.

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1915 *The Song of the Lark*
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1920 *Youth and the Bright Medusa*
1922 *One of Ours*
1923 *April Twilights and Other Poems*
1923 *A Lost Lady*
1925 *The Professor's House*
1926 *My Mortal Enemy*
1927 *Death Comes for the Archbishop*
1931 *Shadows on the Rock*
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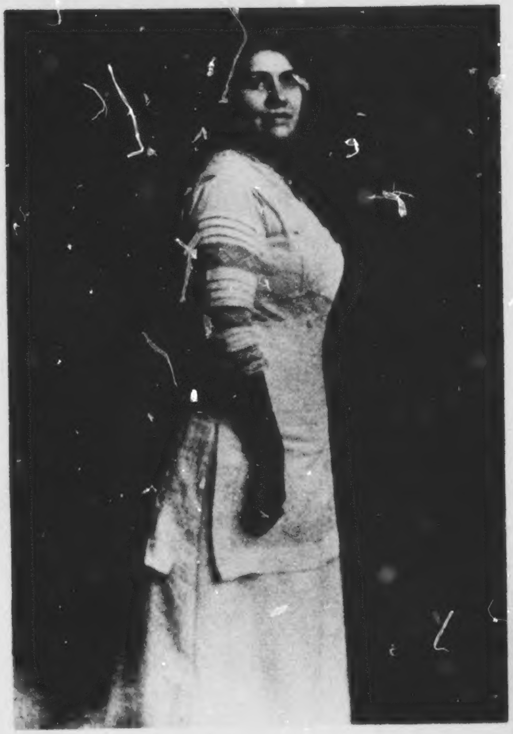
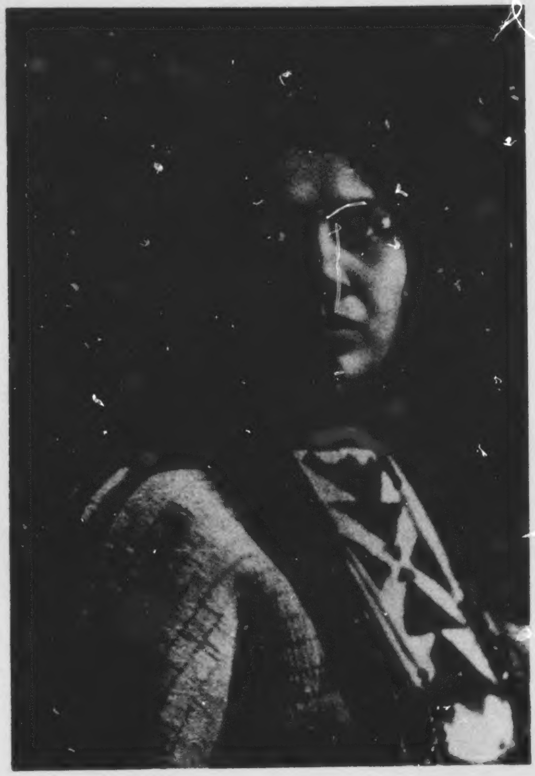
To arrange for a guided tour of Willa Cather's hometown, Red Cloud, Nebraska, and of the surrounding country, contact the Willa Cather Memorial and Educational Foundation, 326 North Webster, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970.





ANGEL DECORA DIETZ

Photographs courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society

ANGEL DECORA DIETZ

The Art Career of a Winnebago Woman

by Sarah McAnulty Quilter

Sarah McAnulty Quilter received a M.A in Art History from the University of New Mexico in 1975. Her special interest is in American Indian art, both prehistoric and historic. In addition to working on archaeological projects in Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Peru, she worked for several years as Slide Program Coordinator for the Smithsonian Institution's Department of Anthropology and Division of Photographic Services. In that capacity, she wrote and prepared slide sets on subjects as diverse as the Ghost Dance religion, Bhutan, George Catlin, and Old World archaeology. Presently she is living in Ripon, Wisconsin, with her husband and one child. She keeps busy with housework, cataloguing 4,800 prehistoric Wisconsin artifacts, and genealogical research.

Angel DeCora Dietz was an exceptional American Indian woman of the late nineteenth century. If one only reads articles written about her by her teachers, missionaries, and Progessive Era reformers, she appears not as a person but as a cardboard symbol of success for those who believed that education would forward the acculturation of the American Indian. Nevertheless, studying the literature about her in more depth and particularly after reading her own writing, one can see that in spite of forceful persuasion she never lost a sense of her Indian heritage or of her personal integrity. When she began to teach other Indians at the Carlisle Indian School, she sought to draw out a pride and appreciation of their personal tribal heritage. This pride in her background and her success in communicating it is what is truly extraordinary about her.

Angel DeCora, or *Hinook-Mahiwi-kilinaka (Fleecy Cloud Floating in Place)*, was born May 3, 1871, on the Winnebago Reservation in Dakota (today Thurston) County, Nebraska. She was the daughter of David "Tall"

DeCora (ca. 1855-July 1888). Her mother was of the tribally prominent LaMere family.[1] The DeCora name was introduced into the Winnebago tribe in the early eighteenth century when a French military man, Descarries (DeCora) married a Winnebago woman.[2] Members of the DeCora family played major roles in tribal history. Many were leaders of large villages in the tribe's Wisconsin homeland. In 1846, responding to a treaty with the United States government. Angel's grandfather, "Little" DeCora (ca. 1879-1887), led a band of Winnebago from Wisconsin to Blue Earth, Minnesota, to resettle. Even though they were not participants in the violent Sioux Uprising of 1862, the Winnebago were forced to move out of Minnesota by the government. They settled for a short time on unsuitable land at Crow Creek, South Dakota. In 1865 they moved further south, finding sanctuary on part of the Omaha Reservation along the banks of the Missouri River.[3]

Angel DeCora was born at a time of great turmoil for her tribe. The group was scattered; some of the Winnebago had stayed in Wisconsin during the group's odyssey; some were in Nebraska; and others secretly returned to Wisconsin. Many of the people were bitter because of their unfair treatment by the government. In the year of Angel's birth, 1871, the government allotted farmsteads to the displaced Indians. For the Winnebago of Nebraska, the traditional woodland-oriented life was gone forever. Despite the major changes in environment for the tribe, they tried to maintain their social structures and religion. No doubt, Angel DeCora was exposed to considerable traditional Indian thought during her childhood. As she neared puberty she would have been instructed by tribal elders in the duties of a Winnebago woman. They would have said:

> *Do not permit your mother to work. Attend to your father's wants. All the work in the house belongs to you. Never be idle. Chop the wood, carry it home, and cook the food, When in the Spring of the year you move back to your permanent settlements, plant your food immediately. Never get lazy. Earthmaker created you for these tasks.*[4]

Angel DeCora was not destined to live as a reservation Indian. In November, 1883 a representative from the Hampton Institute of Virginia came to the Winnebago Reservation seeking Indian children to attend the school. Angel and six other children were selected and given permission to leave by their parents. Angel may have been chosen because of her family's tribal status.

Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded in 1869 for the education of Negroes. In 1878, seventeen Plains Indian men were admitted to the school through the efforts of Captain Richard Henry Pratt, a reformer and military officer. Pratt had been in charge of Indian political prisoners incarcerated at Ft. Marion, Florida, where they had proved themselves educable in white ways. Pratt, like many reformers of the late nineteenth century, felt that education was the way to civilize the Indian and thus a way to end conflicts between whites and Indians. So he sought a school to take his

Indian "boys" and discovered that Hampton was the only place that would admit them. The initial program was successful, and Pratt received a modicum of federal financial support to recruit young Indians for the school.

Very little is known of Angel's life at Hampton. She would have been taught first and foremost to speak and read English and exposed to the fundamentals of Christianity. The Indian girls were expected to learn ". . . washing, cooking, the care of their rooms, and to cut and make and mend their own clothes and the boys."[5] In addition ". . . teachers constantly emphasized training for leadership and the service motive inspiring the humblest of its children to go back and help their people to the light."[6]

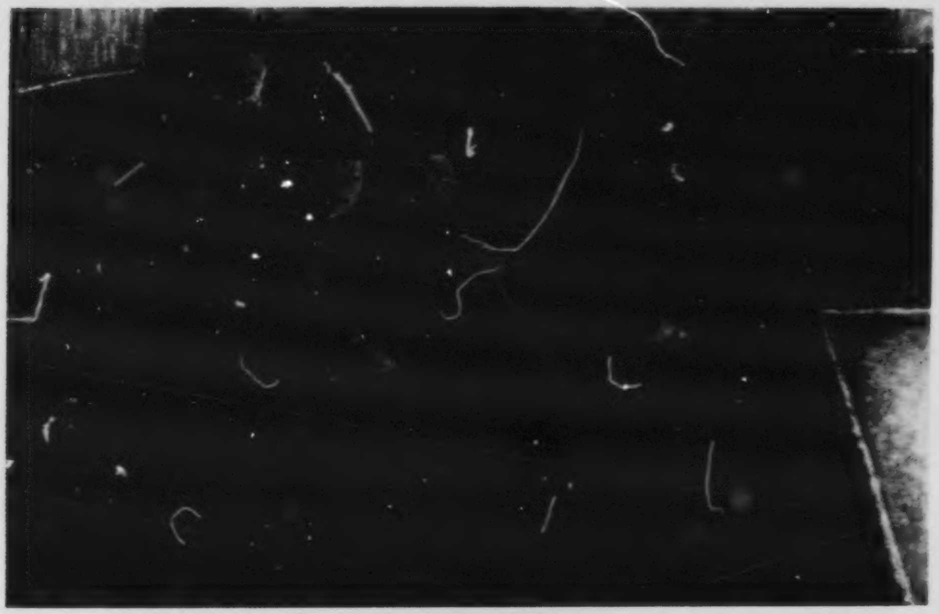
Angel stayed at Hampton for four years and then was returned to the reservation. It was common for Indians to stay in the boarding school for a short period and then to return home without receiving a degree. Angel went back to Hampton after little more than a year because her parents and grandfather had died while she was at home. There was little left for her in Nebraska, and she will ill prepared to cope with reservation life after exposure to white ways at Hampton. School officials managed, with some difficulty, to get her readmitted to the institute.[7]

It was during the second enrollment at Hampton that Angel showed her ability in music and art. What stimulated these interests is unknown. Apparently she showed "an unusual talent for music (as well as drawing) which it seemed best to develop."[8] The Hampton Archives contains a small watercolor by Angel DeCora which was given as a gift to Cora Folsom, the correspondent and historian of the school. The piece is not dated, but it may be work done by Angel while still a student at Hampton. It is a representation of an Indian encampment and was probably done from memory. There is some awkwardness in the perspective and rendering which marks it as an early effort of the artist.

In 1891, at age 20, Angel graduated from Hampton with a high school degree. This was an unusual accomplishment for an Indian woman at that time. Following graduation, she could not return home, for there was nothing for her there. Hampton officials, recognizing their responsibility, secured a scholarship for her to attend Miss Burnham's School in Massachusetts to study music. After a short period there, it became clear that her main skill was in drawing, and she transferred to the Smith College School of Art. At Smith she paid her tuition by acting as custodian for the art museum.

Angel studied art with Dwight Tryon at Smith. A well known landscape painter of the Barbizon School, his paintings were misty, impressionist, and poetic. Smith's museum had a large collection of casts made from the antiquities of Greece and Rome. This was DeCora's first exposure to classical art training and it gave her firm grounding in art and art history. While at Smith she took prizes for several color studies and in drawing from casts and sculpting. She also contributed a well-received crayon portrait of General Armstrong of Hampton to the school's exhibit at the

An art class at Carlisle Indian School prior to 1906. From *The Red Man,* journal of the school.



Main illustration from *The Sick Child,* written and illustrated by Angel DeCora. From *Harper's,* February, 1899, page 447.

1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.[9]

Following graduation from Smith in 1896, Angel enrolled in Philadelphia's Drexel Institute. She began a course of study in illustrative arts under Howard Pyle, the preeminent illustrator of the day. This was a practical choice for Angel who needed skills which would help her earn a living.

It was the hey-day of illustration in America. New photographic printing processes made it possible to print a wider variety of illustrations-everything from line drawings to paintings. Newspapers and magazines, the major entertainment and educational organs for the general public, were full of illustrations. Color printing became more common at this time and added another dimension to illustrating.

Howard Pyle was well-known for his illustrated books, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood, The Wonder Clock, Kidnapped,* and many others. His technique was the opposite of Tryon's: he demanded detail and realistic approach to the subject of the illustration. He asked his students to immerse themselves in the history and details of the subject they were planning to depict. He ran a studio in his home in Wilmington, Delaware, as an adjunct to Drexel and there instructed such successful illustrators as N.C. Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish.

Pyle felt that DeCora's greatest chance at success as an illustrator was to paint and draw Indian subject matter. Realizing that she had been out of touch with Indian reservation life for several years, he advised her to go west in the summer of 1897. This she did, accompanying Anna Dawson Wilde, an Indian graduate of Hampton, on her rounds as matron to Arikara, Hidatsa, and Mandan at Ft. Berthold, North Dakota. While there:

> *She went about into the homes of the people and did a great deal of sketching and photographing, as well as several large canvases. Some of the portraits she made of the old chiefs are of great value as well as beauty. The Indians watched her skill with interest and pride and became so fond of her bright, witty sayings that she had no trouble in getting any number of people to pose for her.*[10]

After returning to the East, Angel wrote and illustrated two stories about Indian life as it had been during her childhood. One story was entitled "The Sick Child." The other was called "Grey Wolf's Daughter." Both were published in 1899 in *Harper's Weekly*, a leading illustrated journal of the day. The illustrations for the stories were so influenced by Pyle's insistence on correct detail, that in the main illustration for "The Sick Child," the architecture the floor matting, the baskets, the doll, the cradle, and the dress of the women are correct and specific enough to give a sense of reality to the picture.

DeCora had a talent for lucid writing as well as for drawing and painting. "The Sick Child" is a story about an attempted aboriginal healing of a baby by traditional "medicine." The sister of the baby tells the story and her part in it. At no point does DeCora scorn the Indian way of healing or suggest that the people should have called a white doctor. This pride in Indian customs is something which she never lost and was a major motivating factor in her later teaching. "Grey Wolf's Daughter" is about a young Indian girl's last night at home before leaving for a distant boarding school and is essentially autobiographical.

These first publications in *Harper's* opened up several doors for DeCora in the field of book illustrating. During the next several years, she illustrated several children's books including Francis LaFlesche's *The Middle Five: Indian Boys at School* (1900), Mary Catherine Judd's *Wigwam Stories* (1906), Zitkala-Sa's *Old Indian Legends* (1907), and Natalie Curtis' *The Indian's Book* (1907).

In 1900 DeCora moved to Boston to continue fine arts studies with Joseph DeCamp, Frank Benson, and Edmund C. Tarbell and maintained a studio at 62 Rutland Square. She reported that at this time she felt a conflict between "Art for Art's Sake" and "Commercial Art."[11]

Angel DeCora moved in 1902 to New York City, the center of the publishing business, to pursue her career as a book illustrator. She kept up her ties with the Indian schools by designing furniture decorations for the Buffalo Exposition of 1900 and by arranging the Indian school exhibit for the Lousiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis in 1904. Through her work in these expositions she became known to federal government officials of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidency. In 1906, Francis E. Leupp, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, asked her to take over the Indian Art program at the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. She apparently was reluctant to do so, saying

> *I will take a government position on one condition only and then, that is that I shall not be expected to teach in the white man's way, but shall be given complete liberty to develop the art of my own race and to apply this, as far as possible, to various forms of art industries and crafts.*[12]

Despite her doubts and because of her desire to help her people, Angel gave up her independent art career in 1906 and joined the faculty of Carlisle. The school, established in 1879 by Colonel Pratt, was strictly for Indians, and was similar in many respects to Hampton. Carlisle is most often remembered for producing Olympic athletes such as Jim Thorpe and Louis Tewanema. At the time of DeCora's arrival, Indian art students were taught easel painting, drawing from casts, and decorating velvet pillows with sentimental figures. DeCora set out to change this and she succeeded.

She quickly converted the Carlisle studio into a showplace of traditional Indian design. A frieze and ceiling decoration based on Plains Indians beadwork designs were added to the studio. Easels and casts were replaced by looms for weaving. Metal working equipment was added. The school journal, *The Red Man*, printed by the Indian students, began to exhibit DeCora's influence by means of Indian-style page borders, head and tail pieces, lettering and covers.

Angel desired to return to her students a sense of their tribal heritage and a racial pride through a study of art. In many cases students had repressed their Indian background in response to pressures exerted by teachers, Indian agents, and others intent on changing them. In a speech given to the International

Congress of Americanists in 1906, Angel describes the transformation of one of her students. She said:

> *The following incident occurred in one of my classes. A young man come [sic] into my classroom time after time, but did not meet my demands to produce some Indian design. He used to sit there, looking very wistful but could not answer even my first question as to what tribe he belonged to. One day he seemed ready to speak, so I went up to him and asked him what he wanted. Almost tragically he said, 'Can you tell me about my tribe?' On further questioning him I found that he was an Alaskan Indian, but of what band he could not tell me. So I took up a book by Dr. Boza [sic] on the Northwestern Indians and began turning the pages. When I came upon some reproductions of the Haida decorations and baskets, he exclaimed with joy, 'That's my tribe!' He explained to me then and there something of the family organizations of his tribe, and also made a very beautiful and interesting border design, using the killer whale as the theme.*[13]

Eventually, DeCora's personal encouragement of her students began to bear artistic fruit. By 1911 they were producing rugs with Indian designs for sale; a group of Navajo and Pueblo silversmiths visited the school for a course in modern smithing techniques; and, several of her students received scholarships to continue their design studies. One particular student, William "Lone Star" Dietz, a Sioux played a more significant part in her life. Dietz was a prominent footballer at Carlisle and also very active in the art program. He decorated the covers of *The Red Man* for several years with forceful, cartoon-like drawings of Indian life and helped teach the art classes. Although he was fourteen years younger than Angel, they were married in July, 1908.

In addition to teaching, in 1906 DeCora began to speak to large national groups about her teaching experiences and ideas for applying Indian designs in non-traditional ways, for instance, on tiles, book plates, textiles flower pots. The groups she spoke to included the International Congress of Americanists (1906), the National Education Association (1907), the Lake Mohonk Conference (1908), and the Society of American Indians (1911) at its first meeting.

Angel kept in firsthand contact with reservation artists by visiting their homes. In the summer of 1907 and 1908 she visited Pueblo and Sioux women artisans and exchanged ideas about designs with them. She was also in contact with anthropologists such as Franz Boas of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. It was through her efforts that Boas' student, Paul Radin, was able to work with the Winnebago and find valuable informants. His work resulted in the publication of his classic study, *The Winnebago Tribe*, in 1932.

In 1911 DeCora became a charter member of the Society of American Indians. This group, founded in Columbus, Ohio, was made up primarily of educated Indians and sympathetic whites who hoped to lobby the government and improve conditions for reservation-bound Indians. The group especially sought an Indian as appointed head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Other Indians active in the organization were Henry Roe Cloud, The Reverend P.J. Deloria, Dr. Charles Eastman, Rosa B. LaFlesche, Arthur C. Parker, and J.N.B. Hewitt. Until the end of her life, DeCora was an active member of this group and gave them $3,000 in her will.

DeCora's productive life at Carlisle was upset in 1914 when a change of administration in Washington, the beginnings of United States involvement in World War I, and a change of jobs for Dietz signalled the end of a successful era for her. Some time previous to 1915 Dietz had left Carlisle to coach football at Washington State University at Pullman, Washington. In 1915, Angel DeCora resigned her post at Carlisle to join him there. Little is known of her activities during this period, but on November 30, 19[illegible]3, she divorced Dietz and returned to the East to resume her career. The Carlisle School closed in 1917 and became an army medical center, as the Wilson administration became engrossed in the problems of the war and set aside interest in Indian problems.

During the summer of 1918, Angel taught arts and crafts at Camp Oahe, a summer camp for girls run by Elaine Goodale Eastman and her daughters. She dreamed of teaching arts and crafts to returning disabled veterans and wanted to publish more Indian-oriented designs. Instead, she worked as an illustrator of Devonian fauna for the New York State Museum in the fall. She lost this position, however, when the previous illustrator returned from military service. Discouraged, she returned to Northhampton, Massachusetts, home of Smith College, and there caught pneumonia and influenza and died on February 6, 1919, at the home of a friend.

Laudatory obituaries were written by her friends and admirers, including Cora Folsom, Elaine Goodale Eastman, Natalie Curtis, and her cousin, Oliver LaMere, who prepared a calendar in her memory. All regretted her premature death and expressed the feeling that with more time she could have advanced the cause of Indian culture.

What Angel DeCora projected in life was an unflagging pride in the artistic accomplishments of Indian people. Curtis quotes her as having said:

> *. . . that she had no more talent than other Indian women. 'My people are natural craftsmen' she used to say, 'The Indian woman from prehistoric times has been an artist. The work of her hand, the product of her thought, has been enshrined in the White man's museums throughout the world. Each basket, each pottery urn when shaped by the Indian woman is an individual art expression created by its maker. The imagination that prompts the symmetry and beauty of the pattern, and the dexterity that gives the skill of perfect workmanship-these are inherent in every Indian. The only difference between me and the women on the reservations is that I have chosen to appy my native gift in the White man's world.*[14]

Howard Pyle, Angel DeCora's teacher, was once asked his opinion of her. His response was that she had great potential as an illustrator, but that ". . .unfortunately she was a woman and still more unfortunately an American Indian. She was so retiring that she always kept in the background of my classes. When I tried to rouse her ambition by telling her how famous she might become, she answered, 'We Indian women are taught that modesty is a woman's chief virtue.'"[15] Pyle's idea of achievement was a white American man's conception of success. As he predicted. Angel DeCora never got fame or fortune through her efforts as an illustrator. Nevertheless, her accomplishments as a teacher of Indian Art to Indians and to the public were revolutionary and prophetic and deserve recognition today.

A discussion of how Angel DeCora's race and femininity affected her career is important in order to understand the significance of her achievements as a teacher.

Very few of Angel DeCora's female contemporaries went far from home or were educated beyond the high school degree. Only a handful of American Indian women of her era attended college or pursued careers. Most American Indian women of the time were confined to reservations and to struggling to maintain tribal traditions and to survive in the face of radical changes in their environment brought on by pressures from whites.

During the 1870's, some white groups and individuals became concerned with the treatment of Indians by the federal government and by white settlers. In many cases these reformers had been involved in anti-slavery groups in the 1850's and 1860's and now transferred their concern to the Indians. Many of these people were members of religious groups, quite a few were women, and all were bent on changing the American Indian so that he/she could fit into white society. None of these people saw anything to admire in tribal society and most viewed the communalism inherent in the groups as detrimental to the progress of Indians. These reformers believed that allotting parcels of land to the Indians would give them a sense of individual enterprise and turn them into happy capitalists. They also saw education in white values as a fundamental way of changing Indians into non-combative citizens. It was thought advisable to educate Indian children at places far from the reservations so that tribal influence could be eradicated; thus, the boarding school concept was born. Angel DeCora was caught up in the first wave of the boarding school movement which was directed at the Plains states, site of continuing bloody conflicts between whites and Indians.

By the time Angel went to Hampton, Indian girls as well as boys were going to school. In white America the women's education movement had begun. Women's colleges like Smith, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, and others were founded. Other universities and colleges became co-educational. It was apparently quite difficult to get Indian families to send their daughters to school. Hampton Institute agreed to take more Indians after the initial seventeen men only on the condition that one-half of them were girls. This was a difficult goal to achieve because, as Captain Pratt said:

> *The girls, from six years of age up to marriage, are expected to help their mothers in the work. They are too valuable in the capacity of drudge during the years when they should be in school to be spared to go. Another equally important obstacle is the fact that the girls constitute a part of the material wealth of the family and bring, in open market, after arriving at marriageable age, a certain price in horses or other valuable property. The parents fully realize that education will elevate their girls away from this property consideration.*[16]

Pratt probably intended well in arguing for the education of Indian women, but he was so intent on vilifying Indian customs that he neglected to note several similarities between Indian and white treatment of women. Many white women of the time were married on the basis of their dowries and some were mail-order brides. The life of a white farmer's wife was full of grueling hard work and drudgery not dissimilar to an Indian woman's lot. And the prevailing sentiment among whites was that women could be educated, but not to the degree that they would turn away from domesticity and compete with men.

Normally, a girl educated at Hampton received training mainly in white-style domestic science. She was expected to return to her home and by her example influence reservation-bound women to accept white values. Actually there was very little difference between what Winnebago tribal elders expected of young women and what Hampton taught. The reformers' theory rarely worked the expected miracles. More often than not the boarding school Indians were viewed by reservation Indians with suspicion and sometimes ostracized. When Angel DeCora returned to Nebraska from Hampton she was only seventeen and hardly prepared to crusade for change. In addition, the loss of the male members of her family put her in a precarious position within the tribe. Hampton had to take her back, give her a home, and find something for her to do; her nascent talent for music and art was, therefore, encouraged and supported. In a sense, her misfortune led to her exceptional treatment at Hampton and to her graduation four years later.

Several Hampton graduates went on to have careers which surpassed the expectations of their teachers. Angel DeCora was one such graduate. In 1904 Cora Folsom wrote an article for *The Congregationalist and Christian World* titled "The Careers of Three Indian Women." The article expresses the conflict which reformers and teachers felt at this time with regards to worldly achievements by Indians and particularly Indian women. The three women discussed in the article were Anna Dawson Wilde, an Arikara matron at Fort Berthold, North Dakota; Susan LaFlesche Picotte, an Omaha woman doctor; and Angel DeCora. In the cases of Wilde and Picotte, the article notes the careers and extraordinary achievements of the two women, but at the same time points out how they both collapsed from working too hard, but were ultimately saved by marriage and a return to domesticity. The idea that working women would collapse or have nervous breakdowns was very common in the late nineteenth century and was often used by opponents of the education of women.[17] When Folsom wrote the article, Angel DeCora was busily engaged in an art career and living alone in New York. She had had no physical or mental collapses.

As a student at Smith College, Angel DeCora was not exactly hampered because she was an Indian. Nevertheless, her race made her an object of curiosity to the other girls and teachers. For instance, the Camera club photographed her dressed in buckskins sitting in a canoe on the school pond. She was an exotic figure-the archetypal Indian princess--but she was not known personally by most of the students.

By teaching art to women at Smith, the college and Dwight Tryon were not trying to create a group of skilled female artists, but rather through the students ". . . as wives and mothers society might be humanized."[18] This attitude towards women's education was typical of the late nineteenth century. Alice Freeman Palmer, President of Wellesley College, in this era said "The civilization of the Anglo-Saxon race depends upon the education--physical, mental, moral, and social-- of women for the next fifty years.[19] Captain Pratt of Hampton and Carlisle had once said that ". . . without educated women there is no civilization.[20] Educated women were to be the keepers of civilization and traditional values, preferably in the home. If they had to work, they were expected and guided to extend these preservation skills into their work. Even the jobs which many educated women held, as teachers and social workers, were an extension of motherhood. DeCora's reasons for studying art at Smith College were very different from most of the students. She needed skills which she could use to make a living. She had no home to return to and no comfortable marriage in the future. The fact that she worked as custodian of the art museum to earn her tuition made her distinct and perhaps an object of pity. According to the general attitude of the day, men could use their education to get ahead and make money. For women, it was preferable to do volunteer work and to use one's education to counterbalance the ambitions of men.

After leaving Smith and entering the art world through Pyle's course, DeCora met and became friends with many of the leading female artists, illustrators, writers, and poets of her day. The artists included Cecilia Beaux, Alice Barbour Stevens, Katherine Pyle. The writers were Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin), Mary Catherine Judd, Elaine Goodale Eastman, and Natalie Curtis. Most of the illustrating work Angel did was for these women's books. Angel's ambition was limited in two ways during her active art career. Like Howard Pyle, most publishers assumed that her racial heritage made her an expert on all things Indian. All of the published work by DeCora revolved around Indian subject matter. If DeCora wanted to do other work, she never had the time, opportunity, or support for it. The second limiting factor was that she was a woman. All of the women mentioned above worked under this constraint. Many of the books and drawings they produced were directed at children. Children were considered the proper audience and subject for woman's art. Walter Shaw Sparrow, editor of *Women Painters of the World*, published in 1905, stated it clearly saying:

> *No male artist, however gifted he may be, will ever be able to experience all the emotional life to which women are subject; and no woman of abilities, how much soever she may try, will be able to borrow from men anything so invaluable to art as her own intuition and the prescient tenderness and grace of her own nursery-nature. Thus, then the bisexuality of genius has limits in art and those limits should be determined by a worker's sex.*[21]

Elaine Goodale Eastman, Natalie Curtis, and Angel DeCora were outspoken in their efforts to advance the cause of minority groups, particularly Indians. They were not ardent feminists, but placed their own ambitions in the cause of helping the oppressed or downtrodden. This activity can be viewed as an extension of the "duty" of educated women as promoted by universities and colleges. Through their association with each other in publishing or exhibiting their writings or art works, they created an informal support group and exerted considerable influence on the public.

Natalie Curtis was particularly successful in campaigning to change government policy with regard to teaching music and art in Indian schools. A collector of Indian music, she noted that the schools were instructing Indians only in white musical and art forms. She made a case for preserving the traditional arts and allowing Indian students to know these and to develop them. She influenced Theodore Roosevelt's administration through articles and personal visits, and finally his officials allowed the desired changes to occur. Angel DeCora's job at Carlisle was a direct result of this policy change. Because of her friendship with Curtis and her familiarity with the anthropological works of Boas and Kroeber (works that took Indian traditions seriously), DeCora began to see her own art and that of her people in a different light. Even though it is clear that DeCora had never lost respect for her tribal hertiage, the new mood of accepting and preserving Indian art and music as valid art forms encouraged her. When she received the opportunity to use her skills and philosophy as a teacher, she was transformed into a powerful spokesperson for the Indian cultural heritage.

To a great degree, Angel DeCora's life and career were ideal when compared to the standards of Indian reformers and those concerned with women's education. Her art was confined to women's subjects and she worked as a teacher helping her people, but she transcended these constraints and developed a relativistic appreciation of the Indian cultural heritage. She was able, during her later life, to communicate this to other Indians and to the general public.

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DORIS STEVENS

Photograph courtesy of Doris Stevens' niece, Olive B. Riordan

DORIS STEVENS

Apostle of Action

by Jane Renner Hood

Jane Renner Hood received her Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in history. She taught European history and women's history at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Creighton University, social studies and English at Ralston Junior High. Since 1978 she has been with the Illinois Humanities Council and is Senior Program Officer in the Chicago Office. Her areas of program speciality include women's issues, history, and humanities education in the secondary schools. She has published articles in all three areas.

In her 1920 history of the militant suffragists' struggle to enfranchise women, Doris Stevens concluded with an optimistic vow: "Women have been aroused never again to be content with their subjection. One thing is certain. They will never again be good and willing slaves."[1]

But Stevens did not anticipate the conservative tide in American life that would militate against continued feminist successes. Nor did she foresee that women would forget their history. Fifty years later, when a feminist movement again burst upon the American scene, there was little common memory of what feminists like Stevens and Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt had accomplished in the first decades of the twentieth century and even less of what suffragists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had done before them in the nineteenth centruy. And the early struggle for the Equal Rights Amendment had been forgotten.

In the 1972 edition of her study of the women's suffrage movement, Eleanor Flexner took Samuel Eliot Morrison to task for ignoring women in his 1965 Oxford History of the American People: "One could hardly guess that the American 'people' included women as well as men: the winning of woman's suffrage by the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution rates just two sentences in a section entitled 'Bootlegging and Other Sports,' dealing with post-World War I developments." In the decade since Flexner's complaint, and certainly within the nearly twenty years since the Oxford History omission, women have become visible participants in America's past, and historians have come to view the first women's rights movement as far more than a colorful, two-line illustration of the Progressive impulse. It has emerged as a complex social movement encompassing differing philosophies, tactics, and factions.[2]

Militant Suffragist

The political writings of Nebraska-born Doris Stevens (November 24, 1888 to March 22, 1963) are an important source of information about militant wing of the suffrage movement and the later equalitarian feminists who worked for an Equal Rights Amendment. Her involvement in the militant movement began in 1913 with the Congressional Union, and she remained active in various offices within the National Woman's Party (NWP) until 1948. As author of *Jailed For Freedom* and later as an associate editor of the NWP's official publication, *Equal Rights* (ER), she described in detail the philosophy and tactics of the militant suffragists and their successors, the equalitarian feminists.[3]

Doris Stevens, the second child of Henry and Caroline Koopman Stevens, was born in Omaha a year after the Stevens family moved to Nebraska from Paterson, New Jersey. Henry Stevens was described by his famous daughter as "an intense and generous person, he always exacted the highest devotion to principle in others, which he himself tried to give." Other portraits sketch a loving and supportive father, who, after hearing Doris address an Omaha assembly on suffrage, advised: "Well, daughter, if you feel this way about it, it is just the thing you've got to do." Caroline Koopman Stevens was born in Parnis, Holland, and immigrated to the United States as a young child when her father, a Domini (minister) of the Dutch Reformed Church, was sent in 1866 to minister to a congregation in South Holland, Illinois. Reverend Koopman and his family located in several Illinois and Iowa communities before finally moving to Paterson, New Jersey. It was in Paterson that Caroline met and married Henry Stevens in 1883, and where their first child, Alice, was born in 1885. Two younger brothers, Henry (called Harry) and Ralph were born in Omaha.[4]

Doris Stevens' childhood and youth in Omaha gave little indication of the direction her life would take. She was a good student at Omaha High School (later Central High School) with particular talent in music. Stevens was an organist for the Lowe Avenue Presbyterian Church, and she pursued her interest in music at Oberlin College.[5]

It was at Oberlin, the first American college to admit both women and Blacks, that Doris Stevens was introduced to militant feminism. On an American tour, the British suffrage leader, Sylvia Pankhurst, visited Oberlin. According to the British journalist, Winifred Holtby, Doris Stevens protested to Mrs. Pankhurst that American men would never abuse suffragists in the way that the English militants had been treated. Sylvia Pankhurst asked the young student, "Have you ever tried asking them for the vote?" Assured that she had, Mrs. Pankhurst rephrased the question: "Have you ever tried asking them—with determination?" Later Stevens would learn that, indeed, American men would jail American women when the demand for the vote became politically embarrassing.[6]

After graduating from Oberlin in 1911, Stevens combined teaching with suffrage activity in Ohio. She worked with the College Equal Suffrage League and was the organizer and field secretary for the Montgomery County Suffrage Association with headquarters in Dayton, Ohio.[7]

In *Jailed For Freedom*, Doris Stevens described her first encounter with Alice Paul, a meeting that would determine the course of Stevens' life for the next thirty-five years as she worked for women's rights first with the Congressional Union and later with the National Woman's Party. In July of 1913, while enroute to a vacation in the Adirondacks, Stevens stopped in Washington to take part in a suffrage demonstration organized by the Congressional Union. Alice Paul asked her to stay on after the demonstration to help. Stevens explained that she had plans to take a much-deserved vacation:

> *"Holiday?" said she, looking straight at me. Instantly ashamed at having mentioned such a legitimate excuse, I murmured something about not having had one since before entering college. "But can't you stay?" she said. I was lost. I knew I would stay.*[8]

By all accounts, this young, Quaker woman was a charismatic leader. Stevens described the impact of Paul's personality on her followers: "In an instant and vivid reaction, I am either congealed or inspired; exhilarated or depressed; sometimes even exasperated, but always moved. . .through a naked force, a vital force which is indefinable but of which one simply cannot be unaware." Doris Stevens was not the only suffragist to fall under Paul's mesmerizing influence. Another chronicler of the suffrage movement, Inez Haynes Irwin, said of Paul: "The fire of her spirit burns at such a heat that it is still and white. . .. With one accord, they [the NWP] say 'She is the Party.' They regard her with admiration which verges on awe."[9]

Alice Paul was the dominant force shaping the militant wing of the suffrage movement, and her influence would continue to direct its successor, the National Woman's Party. Paul's zeal had been forged in the British suffrage movement, and she sought to revitalize American feminism with the militant philosophy that she had learned while working with the Pankhursts in England.

Miss Paul returned to the United States in 1910 at a time when interest in a federal amendment to grant women suffrage was at an all-time low. The suffrage amendment had not been reported out of either its House or Senate committee since 1896. It had not been debated on the floor of either house since 1887. The amendment had never been brought to a vote in the House, and the only time it had been voted upon in the Senate was in 1887. After the death of Susan B. Anthony in 1896, the leadership of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) lost all interest in pursuing a federal amendment and concentrated, instead, on winning the vote in individual states.

But this alternative route did not seem particularly promising either. In the years from 1870 to 1910, there had been 480 campaigns to get the question on the ballot, and in only 17 of these were the suffragists successful in getting the issue submitted before the voters. Nor were those limited referenda successful; by 1910 only four states had awarded their women citizens the suffrage: Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah. Two hard-fought battles would add Washington (1910) and California (1911) to the "suffrage column."[10]

These meager returns for forty years of work convinced a younger generation of feminists that Susan B. Anthony had been correct. In analyzing those unproductive years, Stevens concluded: "Gradually her followers lost sight of her aggressive attack and her objective—the enfranchisement of women by Congress." Alice Paul had begun discussing the more militant actions of the British feminists with American suffragists, and in 1912, Paul and Lucy Burns, another American who had worked with the English suffrage movement, talked with Jane Addams and Anna Howard Shaw about directing NAWSA activity for the federal amendment. Burns and Paul were appointed to the Congressional Committee of NAWSA, and Miss Paul succeeded the current, and inactive, chairwoman as its head.[11]

Paul began her leadership of the Congressional Committee with a Washington, D.C. parade of 5,000 women. Scheduled to take advantage of the crowds gathered for the first inauguration of Woodrow Wilson, the parade garnered national attention and sympathy when spectators roughed up the suffragists, and the police did nothing to quell the near-riot. The parade was a success, Stevens concluded, because "it was no longer a secret that women wanted to vote and that they wanted the President and Congress to act."[12]

In April of 1913, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns formed the Congressional Union (CU), a national organization whose sole purpose was to work for the constitutional amendment. Dr. Shaw, president of NAWSA, gave the new organization her blessing, and both Paul and Burns continued to work with the national organization's Congressional Committee. However, an open rift developed between NAWSA and CU as it became apparent to National's leadership that in Miss Paul's group they had released a force that would be difficult to control.

The matter came to a head in 1914 with the insistence of the CU that NAWSA pursue an all-out drive for the federal amendment. Carrie Chapman Catt, the leader of the New York state suffrage organization, protested because her group was preparing for a 1915 referendum in its state. Catt proposed, rather, a greater centralization of NAWSA's activities which would have included harnessing the Congressional Union to a policy determined by NAWSA's national board. In February, 1914 the national convention of NAWSA defeated the CU proposition and supported, instead, Mrs. Catt's proposed centralization. The two organizations parted ways, and although attempts at reunification were broached, subsequent events prevented it. The Congressional Union became increasingly militant, and after Mrs. Catt assumed the presidency of NAWSA in 1915, her strong centralized direction of the National would not tolerate fringe-group activity.[13]

The Congressional Union helped to revitalize the American suffrage movement with its drive for a federal amendment, and it contributed two distinctive political tactics inherited from the British that set it apart from the NAWSA and other progressive reform movements: The policy of holding the party in power accountable for the success or failure of the amendment's passage and the use of militant confrontation to advance the CU's goal. Although the militant suffragists labored diligently on the state level, their pupose for securing women's votes within individual states was so that those women could send sympathetic legislators to Washington. By 1916, four million women could vote in twelve states. The Congressional Union believed that the time had come to marshal those voters into an effective drive for the federal amendment. Thus the National Woman's Party (NWP) was formed, with Alice Paul as its president and Lucy Burns and Doris Stevens, among others, on its national board. Its purpose was to force the political parties into accountability for their action on the federal amendment.[14]

Following the British example, the NWP held President Wilson and his Democratic party responsible for the failure to achieve the amendment. The CU had campaigned against Democrats running for House and Senate reelection in 1914, and in 1916 Wilson and the Democrats were again the target. The results were not particularly encouraging. Wilson lost the electoral vote of only two states in the suffrage column, but it was clear that the Democratic Party was alarmed by the specter of a women's block.[15]

With President Wilson and the Democrats victorious, the National Woman's Party began the militant confrontation with the Chief Executive that, as Stevens prophesied, would be the most enduring image of the suffrage movement. Although many historians have concluded that Alice Paul's Woman's Party did not become militant until 1917 with the picketing of the White House and the jailing of the suffragists, Doris Stevens argued that a spirit of militancy animated the Party from its very beginning: "Militancy is as much a state of mind, an approach to a task, as it is the commission of deeds of protest. It is the state of mind of those who in their fiery idealism do not lose sight of the real springs of human action." Alice Paul's brand of militancy held an irresistable enticement for the younger generation of feminists who wearied of NAWSA's lethargic struggle. Stevens described vividly its allure in her history of the suffrage movement:

> *It was as if she had bidden women stand erect, with confidence in themselves and in their own judgments, and compelled them to be self-respecting enough to dare to put their freedom first, and so determine for themselves the day when they should be free. Those who had a taste of begging under the old regime and who abandoned it for demanding, know how fine and strong a thing it is to realize that you must take what is yours and not waste your energy proving that you are or will some day be worthy of a gift of power from your masters. . .. Alice Paul gave to thousands of women the essence of freedom.*[16]

The first of the "silent sentinels" appeared in front of the White House on January 10, 1917. A small band of women stood quietly, holding banners asking President Wilson for the right to vote. The reaction to the demonstration was mixed: political editors were divided on the merits and propriety of women picketing the President; NAWSA disavowed the action of its rival; and for the time being, President Wilson ignored it. U.S. entry into World War I would change the President's detached attitude toward the demonstrators, and "the pickets began to be a thorn in his flesh. His own statements of faith in democracy and the necessity for establishing it throughout the world left him open to attack."[17]

On April 2, 1917 President Wilson convened a special session of Congress and called for a declaration of war against Germany. Officials wooed suffragists to the war effort, promising them that the vote would be their reward for contributing to the cause. Although Mrs. Catt and the NAWSA never abandoned work for suffrage as the NWP charged, they did adopt a much more conciliatory policy toward Wilson, and saw no conflict in championing both a war to make the world safe for democracy and a struggle at home to win the vote for women. Ever the pragmatist, Mrs. Catt feared a backlash against suffrage if NAWSA was seen as something less than an ardent supporter of a nation at war. The NWP, on the other hand, disavowed as a party, any work toward the war effort. Individual members could do what they chose, but the National Woman's Party, "should continue to work for political liberty for women and for that alone, believing. . .that in so doing the organization serves the highest interest of the country."[18]

Thus the NWP continued its picketing of the White House and began to use Wilson's war statements on democracy against him on the issue of women's suffrage. Stevens outlined the strategy:

> *The weakest point in the administration's political lines during the war was the inconsistency between a crusade for world democracy and the denial of democracy at home. This was the untenable position of President Wilson and the Democratic Administration, from which we must force them to retreat. We would force such a retreat when we had exposed to the world this weakest point.*[19]

Thus, when the French and English

ministers arrived at the White House, they were greeted by protesters carrying banners asserting "Democracy Should Begin At Home" and "We Demand Justice And Self-Government On Our Own Land." These actions succeeded in compromising the President, as Stevens freely admitted they were intended to: "Of course it was embarrassing. We meant it to be. The truth must be told at all costs. This was no time for manners."[20]

Opposition to the suffragists' activity was building in the press and in Congress. The government began to take measures to repress the demonstrations when banners reading "Tell Our Government It Must Liberate Its People Before It Can Claim Free Russia As An Ally" greeted representatives of the new Kerensky government. The police ordered the suffragists to stop picketing or face arrest. When the women continued their demonstration, six were arrested and judged guilty of "obstructing the traffic." When they refused to pay a fine on the grounds that they were not guilty, the women became the first of hundreds of suffragists jailed for protesting the President's failure to secure the suffrage for American women.[21]

Doris Stevens would be arrested and sentenced following a Bastille Day demonstration on July 14, 1917. Like the other suffragists, she was sentenced to sixty days in the Occoquan Workhouse for obstructing traffic. After three days, the President pardoned Stevens and the others. As they were leaving, the prison superintendent warned that the "next lot of women won't be treated with the same consideration that these women were." The warning was not an idle one.[22]

The women's protest became more vitriolic, and the hostility of the response escalated. Although the NWP never adopted the rock-throwing, window-breaking tactics of its British sisters, its picket rhetoric grew more harshly critical of the President. Stevens explained that the women's resentment of Wilson grew as he seemed willing enough to shed lives for democracy abroad but refused to assist women's rights at home. The President's oratory on freedom and democracy was particularly galling. "They were stung into a protest so militant as to shock not only the President but the Public." The suffragists hoped that their demonstrations would be so embarrassing to the world leader of the democratic cause, that he would be forced to push a suffrage amendment through a Democratic Congress. Their banners asked "Kaiser Wilson" if he had "forgotten how you sympathized with the poor Germans because they were not self-governed. 20,000,000 American women are not self-governed. Take the beam out of your own eye."[23]

In a country "all agog to fight the Germans" such words proved inflammatory, and the protesters were attacked by angry bystanders. The violent reaction reached its climax in August of 1917 when the NWP headquarters was egged, and a bullet was fired into a second-story window, whistling past the head of a Party worker. The police offered no protection from the attackers and, on one occasion, led a mob. There was no attempt to find the person who fired on the Party's headquarters.[24]

Congress responded to the "August Riots" by considering bills that would have allowed the President to prohibit at any time any person from approaching or entering any place. Another would have prohibited citizens during war time from making any demonstration about the rights of suffrage or citizenship. Congress passed neither bill but the administration did deny the suffragists their civil rights by continuing the policy of arrests for obstructing traffic. The sentences became longer, and the administration began to hold some of the suffrage prisoners incommunicado.[25]

In turn, the NWP demanded to be treated as political prisoners—thirty and sixty-day sentences were, after all, beyond the usual punishment for obstructing traffic. It was hoped that "a determined, organized effort to make clear to a wider public the political nature of the offense would intensify the Administration's embarrassment and so accelerate their final surrender." As political prisoners, the militants refused to eat the prison food, and the officials began the painful process of force-feeding the suffragists with tubes inserted through the nose or mouth and extended down into the stomach.[26]

The Administration was anxious to break the hunger strike lest it earn public sympathy for the militants. Furthermore, President Wilson was afraid that the demonstrations would escalate to violence as they had in Britain. In a desperate attempt to defeat the militants, Alice Paul was jailed in the hopes that if the leader was kept from her followers long enough, the NWP protest would die. The tactic did not work, and Stevens' description of Miss Paul's treatment while imprisoned offers a chilling glimpse of a fearful administration's attempts to control a dissident force. Miss Paul was kept incommunicado with the outside and jailed not in the same workhouse as the other prisoners but in a psychopathic ward. Paul was convinced that her examination by a psychiatrist was an attempt to judge her insane and thus, have her committed. Her window was boarded so that little light or air filtered into the cell. She was "observed" hourly under the glare of a bright light so that sustained sleep was impossible. And she was force-fed. After a week of such treatment, NWP's legal counsel was able to get Miss Paul moved from the psychopathic ward back to the workhouse section with the other suffrage prisoners.[27]

The government's tactic did not work. If anything, it backfired, and the messages Paul smuggled out through a sympathetic cleaning woman only inspired her followers to continue action against the President. By November of 1917, thirty women prisoners were on a hunger strike, and eight were near collapse. The Administration capitulated, and on November 27 and 28, all of the prisoners were unconditionally released.[28]

Stevens asserted that it was the picketing, the hunger strikes, and a suit against the prison warden and District Commissioners that finally persuaded the President and the House to take favorable action on the suffrage amendment. An interlude of seven months separated the initial passage in the House in January of

1918 from action in the Senate. Convinced that the President had backed away from his resolve for the amendment, the NWP resumed its demonstrations until the amendment was finally passed in June of 1919. The militant suffragists' final phase of demonstration evidenced the same rationale and tactics that the picketing and hunger strikes had. They kept watch fires burning around the clock fueled by copies of President Wilson's speeches extolling world democracy. Although the protesters were jailed once more, the watch fires burned steadily as President Wilson attended the Paris Peace conference and presented his plans for a world organization to assure peace and freedom. The protest was a dramatic symbol to remind the public that the militants held the President and his party responsible for passing the suffrage amendment. The NWP believed that Wilson was no better than a "very ordinary politician." He could not be counted on to "rise to meet the moon." He had to be pushed to action, convinced that it was politically expedient for the Democrats to vote for suffrage. With considerable understatement, Stevens concluded: "We did our utmost."[29]

NAWSA and other critics of the NWP considered the militant tactics too inflexible to work within an American polical party system characterized by compromise and trade-offs. But Stevens believed that the principles guiding the militants were fundamentally admirable:

> *What a magnificent thing it was for those women to rebel! Their solitary steadfastness to their objective stands out in this world of confused ideals and half-hearted actions, clear and lonely and superb!*

Historians admit that it is difficult to determine whether the militant actions of the NWP or the careful, behind-the-scenes lobbying of the NAWSA was more responsible for the suffrage amendment's success. Stevens claimed the Party's "pressure methods" forced the President and Congress to act; Carrie Chapman Catt complained that the pickets "confuse[d] the public mind," and alienated many a supporter of women's suffrage.[30]

What is clear is that the picketing suffragists were among the first of the political offenders to lose their civil liberties during the conservative climate of World War I. The demonstrators were making the question of civil liberties and personal freedom a domestic issue. Wilson and others in his Administration considered them a dangerous challenge during wartime, particularly during a war waged to secure those rights abroad. Thus the government tried to crush the dissent.

The Administration's response had particularly unfortunate repercussions for the women's movement after the suffrage was won. The militants believed that the suffrage prisoners were martyrs in the cause. NAWSA feared that the militants' actions would compromise the delicate negotiating that they were pursuing with Wilson for his support. Thus the moderate suffragists distanced themselves from the NWP's actions and "tacitly acquiesced by their silence in the injustice being done." The failure of NAWSA to vigorously and publicly protest the administration's action exacerbated the animosity between the two factions. The hostility carried over into the women's movement after the Nineteenth Amendment was won and colored much of the exchange between the National Woman's Party and the heirs to NAWSA in the League of Women Voters and other reform feminists.[31]

Equalitarian Feminist

On August 26, 1920, Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the suffrage amendment, and American women became enfranchised. But after the vote had been won, the women's movement could not unite on the best means to advance women's progress. The reform feminists, including the principal heir to NAWSA, the League of Women Voters, were determined to preserve their hard won protective legislation and to pursue a host of other measures that would advance consumer legislation and governmental reform, and place women on juries, in office, and within the political party structure.

The equalitarian feminists of the National Woman's Party were as impatient with piece-meal reform after the Nineteenth Amendment as they had been with the state-by-state approach to suffrage that had occasioned their original break with NAWSA. The Party believed that the only way to truly advance women's rights was through an amendment to the federal Constitution that would erase the seemingly endless clutter of state and local laws that restricted and discriminated against women. Although the NWP leaders denied initially that the Equal Rights Amendment would eliminate the special legislation that protected women, the bulk of legal opinion in the early 1920s advised that it would.[32]

The Amendment, with its implications for protective legislation, would divide the NWP from the majority of other women's organizations for the two decades following the winning of the suffrage. In a 1924 *Forum* magazine debate with Dr. Alice Hamilton, a pioneer in industrial hygiene and medicine, Doris Stevens set forth the equalitarian feminists' arguments for an Equal Rights Amendment and countered the reform feminists' objections to the "Blanket Amendment."

The purpose of the National Woman's Party, Stevens explained, was to "establish equality between men and women in law and custom." In 1921, the NWP's legal research department had begun a state-by-state survey of laws that discriminated against women. Stevens reported that in no state of the Union did American women enjoy equal protection under the law: "There is not a state which does not in some respects still reflect toward women the attitude of either the old English Common Law or the Napoleonic Code." Women were controlled by their husbands; and in most states, the husband owned the services of his wife in the house. In more than half of the states women could not serve on juries, and in only one-third of the states were men equally prosecuted for prostitution. With the Equal Rights Amendment, these inequities would be removed.

Women would enjoy equal control of their children, property, and earnings; equal rights in contracts, inheritance, and as citizens in national, state, and local government; equal opportunities in education, government service, and the professions and industry, with equal pay for equal work.[33]

The National Woman's Party believed that an amendment to the United States Constitution was the only reasonable way to achieve equal rights. Women's equality, Stevens argued, should be one of the general principles that govern the United States, and therefore, it should be written into the supreme law of the land. More practically, Stevens advised that a federal amendment would be the most efficient way to proceed: "Time and money are important factors. . .why should women take the long, tedious, expensive route when a shorter one lies before them?" And finally, Stevens warned, state laws that benefited women could always be subject to repeal by subsequent legislatures. To safeguard the laws already in place, as well as prevent future discrimination, an amendment to the federal constitution guaranteeing women's equality was necessary.[34]

Stevens then turned to the arguments raised by the reform feminists in opposition to the federal amendment. The objections arising over legislation that protected particular categories of women were the easiest to deflect. Stevens argued that maternity legislation and laws governing widows' pensions would not be affected by an Equal Rights Amendment. Those laws did not pertain to an entire sex; they were designated to protect specific groups under special circumstances. "That group of women whom this legislation is written to protect, will still be protected by such special legislation, just as workmen's compensation, written to cover special groups of men, and soldiers, are written to protect them."[35]

The more difficult problem surrounded the protective legislation that did apply to all women workers—laws that reform feminists were determined to maintain. The National Woman's Party, Stevens explained, was opposed to any restrictions that were not applied to both sexes. Neither men nor women should be exploited by dangerous or unhealthy working conditions. But because laws had been established to protect only women from working long hours at night, or at heavy labor, the legislation often penalized female workers by keeping them from pursuing the better-paying night shifts, overtime, or physically demanding work. Should all be restricted from occupations that were too arduous for the weakest of their sex, asked Stevens? If the streets are dangerous for women who work at night, wouldn't it be better to create safe communities than to confine women to their homes? Nor did women benefit from minimum wage laws that pertained only to them, Stevens contended. She admitted that when women first entered the industrial workforce, they carried with them the psychology of the unpaid laborer in the home, and they were thus easily exploited. But Stevens asserted that as women gained experience and success in the world of paid work, they had begun to pass that psychological barrier and could compete with men if protective legislation did not hold them back.[36]

Stevens was particularly critical of labor unions for not helping women overcome this psychological barrier. They had done nothing to unionize women workers and bring to them the benefits of collective action. Stevens accused union leaders of complicity with those who would deny women equal employment opportunity. Fearful of female competition for jobs, labor leaders had rushed to "the banner of protection for women only."[37]

Although some historians have charged that the NWP prescribed a narrow, legalistic cure for the social ill that grew out of much broader causes, the NWP understood that law is both a reflection and a reinforcement of traditional assumptions about women's inferiority. Passage of the ERA was necessary if the double standard that characterized all of woman's life—legally, politically, economically—was to be eliminated. And in no sphere was this more evident to the equalitarian feminists than in the world of work. Stevens believed that the ERA was economically essential for the American woman.

> *For unless she is able equally to compete, to earn, to control, and to invest her money, unless in short, woman's economic position is made more secure, certainly she cannot establish equality in fact. She will have won merely the shadow of power without essential and authentic substance.*[38]

Like most equalitarian feminists, Stevens did not challenge the capitalist power structure. Rather, she and the NWP focused on women's right to enter that structure and compete on an equal basis with men. Eventually the protection of women workers that had been won in the Progressive era would be extended to male workers as well—as the equalitarian feminists said it should be. But in the 1920's, it was only women workers who were protected, and the equalitarian feminists did not appreciate how threatening the proposed blanket amendment was to the reform feminists who had fought so hard to ameliorate the harsh exploitation of women in the workplace.

Class consciousness helps explain the different perspectives. The equalitarian feminists were well-educated; many were affluent women. They were of a class that would have expected to compete and achieve had they been born male. The reform feminists, although often from the same social strata as the equalitarian feminists, had nonetheless long-term experience in the social reform movement and first-hand knowledge of what it meant to be poor, uneducated, and female in the American workplace. Florence Kelley, the life-long crusader against industrial capitalism's exploitation of women workers, broke early with the NWP, dismissing both the Party and the amendment it sought: "How cruel, therefore, is the pretension of certain organizations of professional women to decide for the wage-earners, without consulting them, about what statutory safeguards they are henceforth to do without." Mary Anderson, a former industrial worker herself and head of the U.S. Women's Bureau during the 1920s and 30s, dismissed the NWP's membership as "all rich women" who had become the tool of the National Association of Manufacturers.[39]

Name-calling became characteristic of both sides, and the animosity it generated made reconciliation impossible. The NWP believed that public discussion of the Equal Rights Amendment, such as the *Forum* debate between Stevens and Hamilton, was the Party's best weapon for it would enable reason and justice to triumph. Nevertheless, Stevens could not resist tweeking the opposition, and she began her essay by comparing the opponents to the ERA with past opponents to the baby-carriage, who asserted that once a young mother was freed from carrying her child she would be off and about into all sorts of mischief. Stevens was not looking for accommodation with the reform feminists, when she declared:

> *the intellectual calibre of the opposition. . .is scarcely more distinguished. It has its roots in the same fears, the same prejudices, and the same feelings of insecurity. It is rarely malicious. When articulate at all, it springs from misunderstanding.*[40]

The vitriolic tone of the debate continued in the second half of the twenties and on into the 1930s, and was further exacerbated by forces at work outside of the women's movement. As the 1920s became increasingly conservative and hostile to Progressive legislation, the reform feminists identified the NWP as part of the enemy. With the depression of the thirties and the growing opposition to women in the workforce, they became even more fearful of public reaction to legislation that protected women workers. The equalitarian feminists, on the other hand, saw in the defense of protective legislation the same sort of reactionary argument that had always opposed progress for women: "Its ghost walked abroad when women asked to be permitted to speak in public; later, when they asked for education; again when they asked to be allowed to enter the professions; and still more recently when they asked for the vote."[41]

In the 1930s, NWP's opposition to the reform feminists became even more vehement. With their connections to Eleanor Roosevelt, the reform feminists were appointed to the governmental positions concerned with women's issues and used their power to block the equalitarian feminists' program. After the first hundred days of the Roosevelt presidency, Doris Stevens complained that "all about us we see attempts being made, buttressed by governmental authority, to throw women into the morass of unlovely dependence from which they were just beginning to emerge."[42]

In no area was this more apparent than in the opposition to an Equal Rights Treaty. Both the equalitarian and the reform feminists advocated an international agenda for women's rights. All feminists advocated suffrage and other humanitarian causes during the 1920s, and all warned against fascism and its impact on the status of women during the thirties. But the reform feminists would again part company with the equalitarian feminists over the issue of the Equal Rights Treaty which would have obliged all signatory nations to grant equal rights to their female citizens. Doris Stevens' writings again provide a useful source for this phase of equalitarian feminism as she was the leader of the NWP's international efforts, and a frequent contributor to *Equal Rights* and other publications.[43]

The National Woman's Party believed that the international movement for women's equality was an integral part of the drive for women's rights in the United States. NWP feminists saw themselves as part of a great historical movement that could not be restricted by national boundaries. Any time that women were discriminated against because of sex, all women were affected because that discrimination implied the inferiority of the whole sex.

> *The fortunes of women in one nation are bound up with the fortunes of women in other nations. As long as women are considered inferior in one place, this social malady will contaminate other areas. Treaty action makes nations march abreast.*[44]

When European or South American women were successful in advancing their cause, they offered American women an effective mirror against which to measure their own progress. After the NWP's triumphs in Latin America, Stevens demanded: "Can we as women ask less than the governments of these four nations gave?"[45]

The NWP feminists were also concerned that the international organizations which had evolved after World War I might take unilateral action that would adversely affect women. The Party was concerned that if it did not monitor their activities, those international bodies might enact decisions that reflected the same discriminatory legislation that shaped national laws. And because these organizations held the same potential for sweeping away discriminatory legislation that a federal amendment did on the national scale in the United States, the NWP focused much of its energy on securing the passage of the Equal Rights Treaty within international organizations.

> *We want this great principle of human liberty recognized as the fundamental principle of international law. More and more men act internationally. If men act in concert, women must do so also. . .. Already in international law conventions unfavorable to women have been adopted. If inequality, based solely on sex, can be the subject of international conventions, so can our rights be made the subject of international conventions.*[46]

It would be this force that would bring the National Woman's Party into direct confrontation with the reform feminists on the international level, and it first erupted over the admission of the National Woman's Party to the International Alliance of Women. The League of Women Voters was the only U.S. member of the Alliance, and in 1926 when the NWP applied for membership, its application was first referred to the

LWV as a matter of courtesy. The League filed a formal protest with the admissions committee of the Alliance against membership for the National Woman's Party, and warned the Alliance that if the NWP were admitted other organizations might withdraw. The Alliance bowed to the pressure of the LWV, and the admissions committee recommended that the NWP be refused membership. The disagreement between equalitarian and reform feminists over protective legislation occasioned a rupture in international feminism as well: eleven members of the Alliance's executive board resigned in protest.[47]

Following its rejection by the International Alliance of Women, the National Woman's Party began to directly lobby international conferences and organizations to adopt the Equal Rights Treaty. Doris Stevens would play a central role on behalf of the NWP within international organizations, particularly in the Pan American Congress.

However, her most spectacular involvement was in the only instance of international lobbying in which the National Woman's Party used the militant tactics that it had employed in agitating for the vote, and it earned Doris Stevens an imprisonment on the European side of the Atlantic. After the delegates at the Kellogg-Briand Conference in 1928 refused Stevens' request for a one-hour appointment, the National Woman's Party began a pressure campaign that culminated in a demonstration before the home of President Doumerque at Rambouillet. The police intervened, and ten of the protesters were detained. Much was made of the police reaction, and Doris Stevens and Alice Paul were very pleased with the publicity that had been garnered for the Equal Rights Treaty. Later, before a crowd of 1000 French feminists, Stevens defended the National Woman's Party's militant tactics with familiar rhetoric:

> *They told us we lacked tact. Of course we lacked tact. We are in revolt, ladies and gentlemen, and when a group, a nation, a race, a sex is in revolt, it is not concerned with tact. Tact belongs to diplomats. Women are not diplomats—yet! We are not ministers of foreign affairs—yet! We are a sex stamped with the stigma of inferiority. And as long as we are, we shall continue to protest.*[48]

But militant protest in the old suffrage mode would not be the typical tactic used during the inter-war years. Rather, the NWP tried to work within the international organizations to achieve its goals. Stevens' work with the Pan American Congress provides a good example of the equalitarian feminists' approach during the 1920s and 30s.

The equalitarian feminists were committed to advancing women's rights in Latin America, and indeed, were convinced that "this side of the world--the Americas--has gone much farther in this matter than has Europe or Asia."[49] It would be in Latin America that the NWP would enjoy its greatest successes in the early 1930s and its greatest disappointments during the last years of the decade, at the hands of the reform feminists with their powerful allies in the White House.

At its 1923 meeting in Santiago, the

fifth Pan American Congress agreed to include a discussion of women's rights at its next meeting. The sixth Pan American Congress was to be a triumph for the National Woman's Party. Representatives of the NWP headed by Doris Stevens were present and persuaded the Congress to set aside the afternoon of February 7, 1928 to hear the feminists' demands. As Stevens crowed in an *Equal Rights* headline, "Feminist History was Made at Havana." It was the first time in the history of international conferences that women rather than male delegates were allowed to present their "claims to equality with men before the law."[50]

Well aware of the opposition of the more conservative reform feminists, Doris Stevens was careful to portray the Equal Rights Treaty as a sober approach to advancing women's cause that was well within the evolution of historical progress. Harkening back to Abigail Adams' reminder to her husband to "not forget the ladies," Stevens suggested that it was particularly appropriate that "the American continent should be the first union of republics to be asked for an Equal Rights Treaty." Stevens used the same arguments for the Equal Rights Treaty that she had earlier advanced for the Equal Rights Amendment: "It is the most dignified means to use," she argued:

> *It is the easiest. It is the most permanent. It will not only abolish existing national and international inequalities. It will prevent new ones from being written. And lastly, it obviates a cruel waste of energy. For we ought never to be compelled to appeal for our rights to the most backward opinion in any State.*[51]

Perhaps an even more important accomplishment of the Havana Congress was the unanimous resolution to create the Inter-American Commission of Women to study their status in the Americas. The Commission, composed of one woman representative from each of the twenty-one nations in the Congress, was empowered to report recommendations at the next Pan American Conference to be held in Montevideo, Mexico in 1933. It was headed by Doris Stevens. Thus the sixth Pan American Congress was a notable success for the National Woman's Party, and it marked the first time that women were to be treated, in Steven's words, "not as auxiliaries but as colleagues." In the five years between the conferences at Havana and Montevideo, the InterAmerican Commission of Women "engaged upon the gloomy task of studying the rights of women as compared with the rights of men." Reading in French, Portuguese, Spanish, and English, the Commission compiled a twenty-one volume analysis of discriminatory legislation--" an ordeal by fire not soon forgotten."[52]

Although the NWP was to be largely successful at the 1933 Pan American Congress, there were ominous indications of the opposition that was growing to its international success. Based on the analysis contained in the study, the Inter-American Commission on Women recommended two treaties: an Equal Rights Treaty and an Equal Nationality Treaty guaranteeing equality in nationality for women. Women would no longer lose their citizenship when they married a foreigner, and their children did not automatically assume the father's nationality at the expense of the mother's. Although the Equal Nationality Treaty was approved and signed by all twenty-one nations except Venezuela, initially the U.S. delegate abstained. Stevens and the NWP were caught by surprise. Although the League of Women Voters denied that Eleanor Roosevelt had interceded upon their belief, it was clear that the LWV had advised the State Department of their opposition to any "blanket" treaties that might hinder future legislation. Most other women's groups took issue with the LWV's opposition. The United States' position triggered such an unfavorable reaction that 72 hours later, the U.S. delegate had reversed his position.[53]

With most of their energies devoted to winning the Equal Nationality Treaty and warding off attempts to disband the InterAmerican Commission of Women, Stevens and her colleagues enjoyed less success with regard to their second proposal, the Equal Rights Treaty. They were able to get Uruguay, Paraguay, Equador and Cuba to sign it. Nevertheless, Stevens asserted that "it is significant that we got as far as we did with so few people in the center of action and so little money." Furthermore, the example of the four signatories could serve as a stimulus to action: "We can, with new devotion and fresh industry, pledge to take a swifter, more invigorating pace," Stevens urged. "It is entirely up to us."[54]

Stevens' prediction proved to be too optimistic. In the five years between the Montevideo and the eighth Pan American Conference at Lima, the reform feminists worked diligently to stall the progress the InterAmerican Commission had made toward an Equal Rights Treaty and to promote, instead, endorsements for protective legislation. President Roosevelt approved a resolution that combined safeguards for protective legislation with advocacy for women's rights and instructed the U.S. delegates at the Lima conference to support it. Social feminists were victorious also in their fight to remove Doris Stevens as the chair of the InterAmerican Commission. Because she had been appointed by the Pan American Congress rather than the U.S. State Department, Stevens was vulnerable. In 1940 the Commission was completely reorganized. A Latin American was appointed chair, and a reform feminist from the Women's Trade Union League was named as the U.S. representative. The NWP's direction of Latin American feminism had been successfully blocked by the reformers.[55]

The NWP had hoped to duplicate the early Pan American successes in Europe through the League of Nations, but they would never be as successful as Stevens and the InterAmerican Commission of Women had been. Alice Paul's strategy was to place the Equal Rights Treaty on the League of Nations' agenda, and then build support for it through international women's organizations and individual member nations. The reform feminists' opposition to the Equal Rights Treaty took the form of a Women's Charter designed to protect special legislation for women while at the same time enlisting the support of international feminists who found the

Equal Rights Treaty attractive. That proved to be an impossible marriage of principles, and the Women's Charter was a failure. But the division within feminist ranks had prevented as well the National Woman's Party from garnering sufficient support for an international Equal Rights Treaty.[56]

By the end of the 1930's, international feminism had reached an impasse on both sides of the Atlantic. The reform feminists had effectively stymied the equalitarian's program among the Pan American nations, and in Europe neither faction had made productive headway within the League of Nations. Alice Paul's attempt to build the National Woman's Party into the World Woman's Party with headquarters in Geneva in the late 1930s was able to do little more than give shelter to feminists who were fleeing the growing power of fascism. In 1941, Alice Paul was forced to return to the United States, and the Second World War answered, at least for the time being, the question of women in the work force. They were there because a war-time economy needed their labor, not because society had recognized their right to equal opportunity. It also gave the prophetic lie to Doris Stevens' hopeful promise spoken at the victory dinner in her honor after the 1933 Montivideo Congress:

> *We can end the brutal degradation of women taking new form throughout the world. We can refuse to accept a jungle world in which men and women live in stupid, destructive competition and build a lively society in which men and women cooperate.*[57]

Although the National Woman's Party directed most of its attention to the Equal Rights Amendment and the Equal Rights Treaty, the Party was interested in a wide range of women's issues and advocated legal remedies that would improve women's status.[58] However, the equalitarian feminists remained convinced that the blanket amendment was the most effective way to deal with the myriad laws that kept women in a second-class position. It was a posture that grew logically out of their struggle for the suffrage. They were as impatient with statute-by-statute reform as they had been with state-by-state suffrage. But it was a philosophy of women's rights fated to make the NWP's position a minority voice within the inter-war feminist movement. Most progressive and New Deal feminists remained convinced that the harshness and the potential for exploitation that characterized the workplace necessitated special protection for women. The Equal Rights Amendment, then, was an issue that prevented compromise or cooperation between the equalitarian and the reform feminists.

If the philosophical assumptions of the NWP remained consistent as the feminists worked first for a suffrage amendment and then for an amendment to guarantee equal rights, its tactics did change after 1920. With the exception of the Ramboillet protest, the NWP that had characterized the suffrage struggle was out-of-tune with the conservative temper of post-World War I America. The NWP did not lose its touch for effective publicity however. Stevens and other members peppered the national press with articles that drew attention to women's second-class status. NWP sponsored pageants and plays celebrated important anniversaries. And the Party supported preservation of important documents in women's history as well as the writing of their history.[56]

In an unpublished essay composed probably in 1936, Stevens put to paper some informal musings about why she had dedicated her life to feminism. Her unconscious motive, she suggested, was a result of coming from missionary stock with "always another effort to be made." Stevens identified her conscious motive as the wish to have accomplished something with her life: "We have only a short time to live and then we are gone. We ought to do it better than we do." Stevens believed that "Culture moves on through those who have something to give which society wants." Doris Stevens chose to move "culture in the direction of welcoming and not hindering women's efforts to express their wishes with dignity and authority in such realms of life as they may choose for their forum." Stevens closed her thoughts with the hope that she would live long enough to see the United States move from being a "land where women are forced to battle for the simple right to equal treatment to a country where this is accepted and where we may then get on with the enjoyment of the infinite variety of human experiences. . ."[57]

Her wish was not granted. Stevens did not live to see the feminist movement revived and the drive for the Equal Rights Amendment renewed. She died of cardiac arrest on March 22, 1963--the same year in which Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* was published. The opening salvo had been fired that would renew the struggle to which Doris Stevens had dedicated her life.

NOTES

1. Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), p. 343.

2. Flexner was justified in her criticism of Morrison, as her study of the American woman from colonial times through 1920 had been first published seven years before the 1965 Oxford History. The edition referred to in this essay is Flexner, *Century of Struggle* (New York: Atheneum, 1974).

3. In addition to *Jailed for Freedom,* Doris Stevens' political writings include: "America Takes Her Stand Among Nations for Equality," *Congressional Digest IX* (November, 1930), 280-288 A; "Blanket Amendment Debate," *Forum LXXII* (August, 1924), 145-152; "The New Freedom in Divorce: A Debate," *Forum* 322-332; "Wages for Wives," *The Nation CXXII* (January 27, 1926), 81-83. Another important source for Stevens' political essays is the offical publication of the National Woman's Party, *Equal Rights.* Articles by Stevens and reprints of her speeches appeared in *Equal Rights* throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

4. *Omaha World Herald,* May 24, 1930, p. 7; March 24, 1963, p. 15; Winifred Holtby, "An Apostle of Action," *Time and Tide,* October 26,

1928, n. pag.

5. This interest in music was resumed in her later years with the composition of over a dozen songs during the early 1950s. Many of them capture memories of her early years in Nebraska. In 1976 Doris Stevens' husband, Jonathan Mitchell, donated the songs to the Nebraska State Historical Society.

6. Holtby, "Apostle of Action," n.pag.

7. Her education at Oberlin was interrupted by the necessity to work. Stevens taught school at Oak, Nebraska during the 1906-7 term; Letter received from Wm. T. Classen, Nuckolls County Superintendent of Schools, June 10, 1980; Oberlin College Alumni Record, submitted by Jonathan Mitchell, September 27, 1963.

8. Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, p. 11.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11; Inez Haynes Irwin, *The Story of the Woman's Party* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1921), pp. 14-15.

10. Susan B. Anthony had always been convinced of the necessity of a federal amendment and had harbored distrust of the state-by-state approach, even when it was the official NAWSA policy. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 222, 254-256; Irwin, *Woman's Party*, p. 3.

11. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p. 263; Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, p. 8.

12. Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, p. 22.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 28; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 265-274.

14. Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, pp. 74-75: Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p. 276.

15. See Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, pp. 42-47 and Irwin, *Woman's Party*, pp. 174-178 for details of the furiously fought campaign in the western states.

16. Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, pp. 13-14, 66.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 82; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p. 284.

19. Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, p. 84.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-95.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-133. See also Chapter Six, "Prison Episodes," for Stevens' description of the unhygienic and dangerous conditions at the Occoquan Workhouse.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 184-191. Stevens was aware of the growing conservatism in America and the disapproval with which the average American viewed the most militant actions of the British suffragists. Therefore she was careful to preface her discussion of the forced feeding with an historical over-view of the hunger strike as a weapon against oppression "almost as old as civilization."

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 217-225; Janice Law Trecker, "The Suffrage Prisoners," *The American Scholar*, XLI (Summer, 1972), 422-423.

28. Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, p. 241.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 339-340, 329.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 329; Trecker, "Suffrage Prisoners," p. 414; Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p. 287; Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 1890-1920 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1971), pp. 198-201.

31. Most discussions of government

persecution of American citizens during World War I have focused on the socialists and pacifists prosecuted under the Espionage Act. It is clear, however, that the militant suffragists were among the "earliest victims of the abrogation of civil liberties of wartime." Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p. 285. The final appendix in *Jailed for Freedom* is a review of the way political prisoners were treated in European nations. Stevens concluded that "No country, not excluding imperial Germany, has ever given such cruelly long sentences to political offenders [specifically, the suffragists] as did America during the late war."

32. J. Stanley Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 185.

33. Stevens, "Blanket Amendment" pp. 146-147.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-151.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 148: cf. Susan D. Becker, *The Origins of the Equal Rights Amendment; American Feminism Between the Wars* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981) and William H. Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) with Cynthia M. Patterson, "New Directions in the Political History of Women: A Case Study of the National Woman's Party's Campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment, 1920-1927," forthcoming in *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, Summer, 1982.

39. Becker, *Origins*, p. 213; Florence Kelley, "The New Woman's Party," *Survey*, March 5, 1921, as cited in William L. O'Neill, *Everyone was Brave* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), p. 276; Patterson, "New Directions," pp. 9, 14-15 (manuscript pages).

40. Stevens, Blanket Amendment," pp. 145-146.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

42. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave*, p. 293.

43. Becker, *Origins*, p. 23.

44. Stevens, *Equal Rights*, June 16, 1934, p. 158.

45. *Ibid.*,

46. Stevens, *Equal Rights*, December 1, 1928, p. 340.

47. Becker, *Origins*, p. 47.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 173; Stevens, *Equal Rights*, December 1, 1928, pp. 340-1.

49. Stevens, *"American Takes Her Stand,"* p. 280.

50. Stevens, *Equal Rights*, March 3, 1928, p. 9.

51. See March 3, 1928 of *Equal Rights* for the full text of Stevens' address to the sixth Pan America Congress.

52. Stevens, *Equal Rights*, July 21, 1934, pp. 195-196.

53. Becker, *Origins*, pp. 183-184; Stevens, *Equal Rights*, February 17, 1934, pp. 1920.

54. Stevens, *Equal Rights*, June 16, 1934, p. 160.

55. Becker, *Origins*, pp. 184-186.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-182.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 182-183; Stevens, *Equal Rights*, June 16, 1934, p. 160.

58. For two such remedies, see Stevens' proposal for a uniform divorce code in the August, 1924 *Forum* and her article proposing a marriage contract that would safeguard the financial security of

wives who worked in the home in the January 27, 1926 *Nation.*

59. Becker, *Origins*, pp. 105-111, 277-278.

60. Doris Stevens, Manuscript written probably in 1936 in Olive B. Riordan's collection of the Stevens family papers.

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The women's movement during the 1920s and 1930s has begun to receive careful analysis. Many of the following works also touch on the earlier suffrage movement. The most valuable for this essay was Susan D. Becker, *The Origins of the Equal Rights Amendment: American Feminism Between the Wars* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981).

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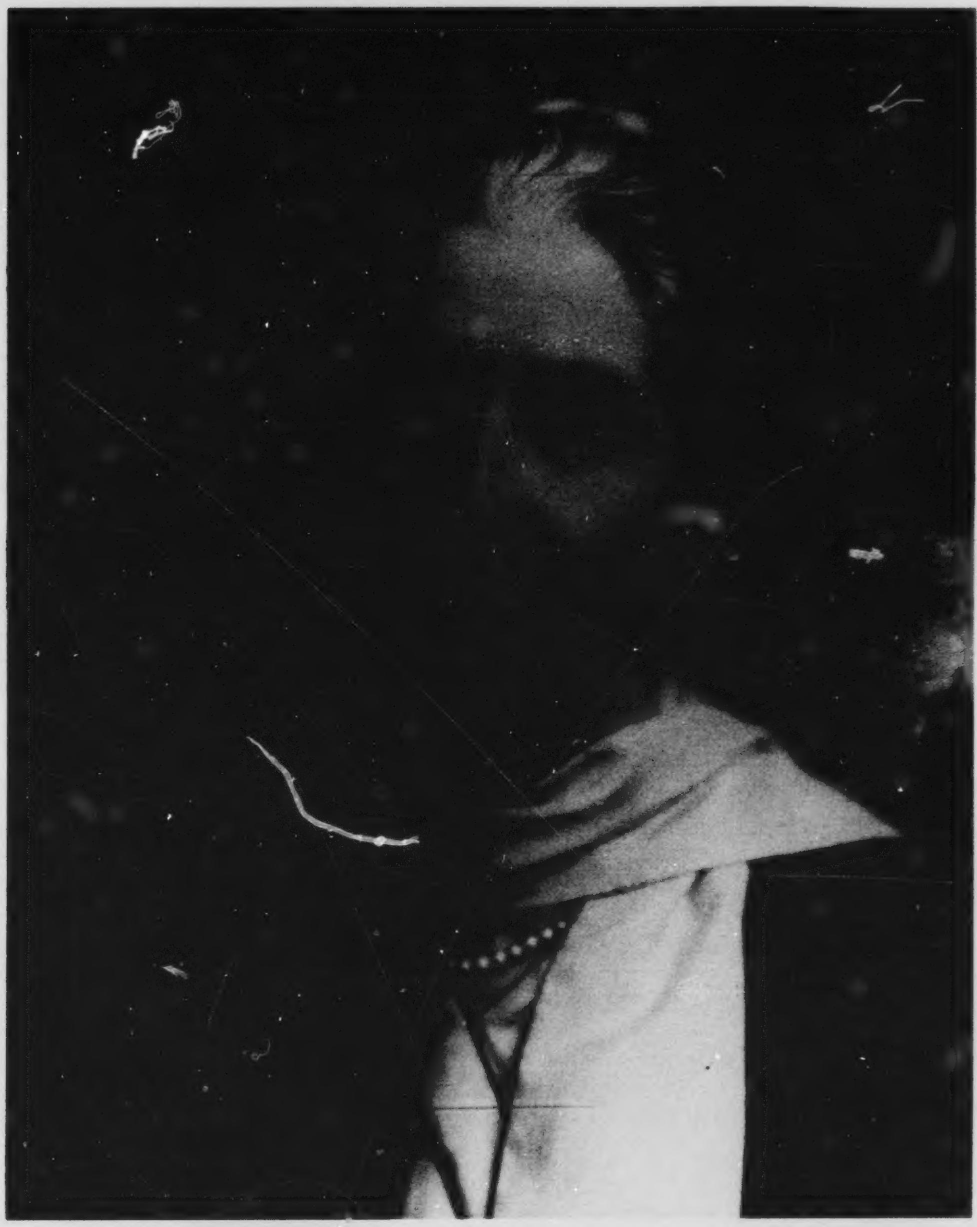

BESS STREETER ALDRICH

Photograph courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society

BESS STREETER ALDRICH

Celebrant of the Traditional Woman in Nebraska

by Carol Miles Petersen

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Women often assume that it is necessary to move outside of tradition to create. Bess Streeter Aldrich's life would argue with this assumption. She exemplifies the traditional woman, even though the early loss of her husband caused her to "re-create" her life from that of wife and helpmate to that of sole support of her young family, a role not uncommon to women. Within this new head-of-household framework, however, she retained the traditional ideals and ways of living when she turned to her writing—of which her husband had been proud—as a means of making a living. Although Aldrich accepted conventions, she retained her individualism. She refused to write of the sordid and degrading because she did not see those elements in the people whose lives she created. She wrote, she said, of the life that she herself led—clean and conservative. She had a strong spirit of independence, and she adventured through her traditional world, using it as a base of operations from which she moved outward to national best seller lists, to many nations of the world where her work was read in translations, to Hollywood where she worked on movie scripts or worked to sell her own manuscripts, to her movie grand opening in New York, and to the exercise of financial power in the southeast part of her own state of Nebraska.

Bess Streeter was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1881, of pioneering parents. She was a fourteen year old school girl when she won her first writing prize, a camera. At seventeen, she won $5.00 and purchased a black chiffon parasol for which, she later commented, she had absolutely no use. She was not planning to write for her life's work, so she enrolled in Iowa State Teachers College, earned her degree, and taught at the Teachers College for a year where, in 1903 and 1904, she had work published in a supplementary reader for children. She met Captain Charles S. Aldrich, a recent returnee from the Spanish-American War. They were married in 1907, and, with her sister and brother-in-law, purchased the bank in the southeast Nebraska community of Elmwood. They moved there in 1909.

In Elmwood, Aldrich started writing again, admitting that she had "the writing bug" and "enjoyed it [because] it seemed so easy."[1] Between household chores and babies' naps, she found time to create stories. She viewed her writing as a hobby although she was selling an occasional story to what she called second or third rate magazines and was acquiring a quantity of rejection slips. She also wrote poetry, and, until 1918, she sometimes wrote under the pen name of Margaret Dean Stevens, for, as she explained, "I felt a timidity in having my stuff read—the typical amateur's print-fright, which is the writer's stage fright."[2] Even though some of her work was being accepted, she wanted to improve her skills and techniques and enrolled in a writing course through correspondence. However, her instructor finally told her that he was not able to teach her, that she had the skills and the natural talents that were required of a successful writer and that all he could do, if she chose to continue sending her "lessons" to him, was to make editorial comments. She later questioned whether one person could really tell another how to write, for the most important thing was to "write the thing which lies closest to your heart."[3]

In 1911, she sent one of her short stories to a *Ladies Home Journal* contest in which some 2,300 other manuscripts had also been entered. Hers did not win. However, the editors liked the story well enough that they bought it for $175.00. The editor told her he would like to have her send more, and she decided that "it sounded nice, writing a story a month and getting $175.00 for it."[4] Although this was strong encouragement for her to continue to write and send out her stories, it did not automatically indicate that she had "arrived," for she was, in broadly this same time, sending out a story which went to offices of twenty-three editors before it was finally purchased for $20.00. Another story, "The Man Who Caught the Weather," was rejected twenty-eight times before it was finally purchased by *Century Magazine*, but it was subsequently chosen as one of the O. Henry Memorial Prize Stories of 1928, was anthologized, syndicated, and sold to a British magazine. These two examples of sending out a work on multiple trips demonstrates the pragmatic side of Mrs. Aldrich—and the determined. She commented at one time that she had never written a story she didn't publish, and she wrote 160 short stories and eleven "prairie" novels. When one came back, she worked on it, rewrote, and sent it out again. In her autobiography she said quite frankly that she didn't like to have all that "long and tedious work go for nothing if I could help it." With a growing family, she did not have the luxury of wasting her time or stories.

With all of the work and activity involving a family, she found it difficult to find opportunities to write; her children and her husband were her primary concerns, and there was little free time. Yet, once again, she managed to work within the framework of tradition, of convention, and she created salable stories. She wrote the story that sold for $175.00 she said, "while the baby was having her nap on [my] knee."[5] In a 1926 interview, she discussed the problem of writing with children and household tasks so ever-demanding. She said she "wrote when the meat cooked, when babies tumbled under my feet, and while I was ironing, in the old days. The hand that rocked the cradle was often the left one, while the right was jotting down a sentence or two. I have had the first draft of many a story sprinkled liberally with good old sudsey dishwater."[6] Ideally, she planned to work on a short story for three weeks, doing four drafts and trying to have it complete on the fourth. Then she would rest a week before starting on a new one. In reality, of course, the plan seldom worked out this easily, but her husband, who was very proud of her writing, gave her strong support. Aldrich said, "he urged me on, pressed me to take more time for writing, encouraged me in every way."[7]

She and "Cap" Aldrich enjoyed the life of a small town, and they were both active in church work. On a Sunday in 1925, Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich and their four children, ranging from sixteen years of age down to four, attended church as usual. Mr. Aldrich taught his Sunday School class and then went to worship services; during the latter service, he suffered a heart attack and died almost immediately. Mrs. Aldrich had entered the church as wife of a town banker and attorney; she left it as widow and sole support of five people. She now had to function, as have many women, in a new role, creating a new life and becoming the one to earn the money and be the financial manager of the family.

"Cap" Aldrich had told her jokingly at one time that if she were ever to be the breadwinner she could support them by writing more of the "Mason Family" series. She had sold the first of these, "Mother's Dash for Liberty," in 1918, to the Appleton-Century Company who agreed to take all such stories she sent; they had recognized the value of these stories when a soldier in the Army of Occupation in Germany wrote, saying the men of his barracks had worn out his copy with frequent reading because it reminded them so much of home. This series may have been an innovation, for, at that time, family series were not the magazine staple they were later to become. These *Mother Mason* stories were based loosely on the Aldrich family and, published in 1924, became her first book. She later patterned another family series on life in her home. Appleton published them, and Rudyard Kipling praised them as typical of the American family. These were gathered into a work called *The Cutters* and published in 1926 as her third book.[8]

Thus writing, which she had considered a hobby, now had become a business, her primary source of income. She could earn more, she said, through the sale of one story than she had in a full year of teaching. The lives and activities of her children still came ahead of her writing, however. One of her sons recalled that she was always willing to stop and listen when one of them needed to talk to her. Her daughter described the study as the gathering place for all the neighborhood children where games and conversations formed the background for her mother's work.[9]

The books and stories that she wrote under these conditions were translated into many languages—*Lantern in Her Hand* alone had fifteen translations. All of her books were also available in Braille. She completed her second novel, *The Rim of the Prairie*, in 1925, the year of her husband's death, and dedicated it to his memory; he often spoke of his love for the rim of the prairie as seen from her study window. Following publication of this work, she was invited to talk on a radio program on KFAB. At that time, radio was still very new. The only way her children could hear her was to go to the local doctor's house to listen—he owned the only radio in the town. She discussed her writing, and, at the end of the program, requested anyone listening who might have pioneer life anecdotes that they would be willing to share to send them to her as she was very interested in that particular phase of Nebraska history. She was hopeful of getting as many as a half a dozen responses, but newspaper clippings, letters, scrapbooks, and diaries flooded in from people throughout the state who wanted her to know "how it was." It took fourteen months to sort and study this material, and from these stories and from her mother's recollections of family and friends, came *A Lantern in Her Hand* in 1928.

This is the story of pioneer Abbie Deal and her husband, Will, who came to Nebraska in its early days, suffered the hardships of newcomers to an unknown and unwilling land, and yet triumphed as precursors of the strong and independent people who inherited their strengths and their state. Aldrich was occasionally discouraged with her writing about Abbie Deal, saying that Abbie never "*did* anything, she was just a woman!"[10] This, however, is the heart of the work, for Abbie is, indeed, "just" a woman, a woman admirably fulfilling the female role in the settling of a new territory. The heroics which some writers have described as "life on the prairie" were not everyday occurrences; the everyday happenings were those which encompassed bearing and raising children, planting, harvesting, and preserving crops, being a good neighbor and friend. Abbie lived the high drama of her own life, which, on a collective basis, seems ordinary, but individually is full of excitement. This book was Aldrich's first to reach the best seller lists; her subsequent works all became best sellers.

In 1931, *A White Bird Flying* was published and was the sequel to *Lantern*. This story traces the life of one of Abbie's granddaughters, Laura, from Abbie's death to the young woman's maturity and motherhood, depicting her inheritance from Abbie of a strong character and a strong love of the land. It touches others of Abbie's descendents and follows various parts of their lives as they mesh and separate from Laura's. One of Aldrich's great writing strengths was her ability to create realistic portraits of the elderly, and this talent is particularly notable here in the descriptions of Christine Reinmueller and Old Oscar Lutz, two of Abbie and Will's settler contemporaries and friends. *White Bird Flying* was one of the three best sellers in the nation that year, trailing only Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* and Willa Cather's *Shadows on the Rock*. It is interesting to note that all three of the best sellers for 1931 were written by women and that two of those women were Nebraskans.

At one time, she said that being a writer in a small town kept one humble, for there she was only a woman who bought bread. However, her financial power and willingness to use it undercut this touch of modesty, for Aldrich kept the local bank from going under during the depression. In 1933, when she was writing *Miss Bishop*, she found that the Bank of Elmwood was having serious monetary problems, which arose from bond depreciations and a lack of cash reserves to meet the state requirements. If the bank were to close, not only would her sister and brother-in-law be devastated, but so would the townspeople and the farmers of the area. Aldrich went to the State Bank Commissioner and said that she could not write while the bank and those who relied on its solvency were in danger, told him to name the amount necessary for the bank to remain open, and she would furnish it. She went to her "tin box," as she called it, and sold enough to raise the needed funds. She refused to accept any reimbursement for this act and would not allow the story to be told during her lifetime.[11] It was a well kept secret. Because of the "bank situation" she requested a $5,000 advance on her royalties that year—the first time she had ever done so.[12]

The book on which she was working at the time was purchased by producer Richard Rowland in 1939, and was made into the movie *Cheers for Miss Bishop*, released by United Artists. Stephen Vincent Benet wrote the film script, and Martha Scott played the title role. The setting for this book was a "typical" midwestern college town similar to Lincoln, Nebraska. One of the prototypes for Miss Bishop, the educator/protagonist, was Louise Pound. In this, as in all of her work, Aldrich spent whatever time was necessary to trace the accuracy of a point before she would incorporate it into her story; because educators recognized this, her works were used in schools as supplementary readings for history as well as English.[13] Aldrich had once been a teacher and understood many of their problems. For this reason, she brought her financial strength into play for them by having a clause in her Miss Bishop movie contract stating that 25% of the proceeds were to go to the National Education Association to help fund the building of homes for retired school teachers.

Once again, Bess Streeter Aldrich moved outside of what are generally considered traditional boundaries by going to Hollywood where she was an advisor on the making of this movie. She also, on another occasion, was called to Hollywood to work on a film of pioneer women due to her understanding and research on the women of this era. On this trip, she took her youngest son with her and wrote frequent letters to her family who remained at home. Later, from New York City, where she had gone for the opening of her movie at Radio City Music Hall, she wrote home in much amusement that "I never thought I'd live to see my name in the subway at all the underground waiting stations, but there it was yesterday even if smallest under Scott's and Gargan's big printed names."[14]

Recognition came to Aldrich through best seller lists and movie openings, but in other ways also, such as being asked to be one of the judges on the "Family Bookshelf" of the *Christian Herald*. Later she became the literary editor for the *Christian Herald* and wrote a monthly column. In 1934, she was given an honorary doctorate from the University of Nebraska. After World War II, Admiral Chester Nimitz sent her an autographed picture of the signing of the peace treaty on the *USS Missouri* in recognition of the strengthening effect on the men by the pioneers in *Lantern in Her Hand*, "during the darkest days of the war in the Pacific."[15] Aldrich died in 1954, and in 1973 a bronze bust of her was installed in the Nebraska State Capitol Hall of Fame.

Aldrich's books are filled with images of traditional people living traditional lives, and this has been criticized as being sentimental. Critic Harlan Hatcher defended her by saying that "where she introduced sentiment she was as realistic with her chosen subject matter as her hard boiled contemporaries were with theirs."[16] Her comment was that she wrote what she knew, what was closest to her heart, and that "if a writer has done the best he could—interpreted life as he has seen it, lived up to his own ideals, refused to barter his self-respect. . .then neither criticism nor condemnation seem very significant."[17] It is not, however, surprising that her books have mirrored the traditional way of life, for that is the life she lived—and in which she believed—a life of marriage, family, and work. She also moved outside of these perimeters to take risks, to be independent, to use power. Being traditional did not bind her to subservience and to domination by family or "things"; rather it opened doors to other worlds where she could retain her ideals and her sense of humor as a creative and rewarding individual. During her last illness she summed up acceptance of her life and its fullness when she told her daughter, "I have written my books. I have raised my family. However this turns out, it will be all right."[18]

NOTES

1. Robert Houston, "A Resolute Writer," *Omaha World-Herald Magazine*, March 20, 1949.

2. Amelia Mabel Meier, *Bess Streeter Aldrich: Her Life and Works*, Thesis Kearney State College, 1968, p. 19.

3. Bess Streeter Aldrich, "The Story Behind *A Lantern in Her Hand*," *Christian Herald*, March, 1952.

4. *Bess Streeter Aldrich*, furnished by Elmwood, Nebraska "Bess Streeter Aldrich Society," (n.p.: n.p.: n.d.: n.pag.).

5. Aldrich Society, n.p.

6. "Nebraska Woman Gains Fame as an Author," *Fillmore County News*, May 13, 1926, *Bess Streeter Aldrich Scrapbook*, Nebraska State Historical Archives.

7. *Fillmore County News* in *Scrapbook*.

8. Aldrich Society, p. 4.

9. Personal interview with Mrs. Mary Aldrich Beechner, January 14, 1983.

10. Interview, Mrs. Beechner.

11. Interview, Mrs. Beechner.

12. Letter to Mrs. Aldrich from Rutger Bleeker Jewett, No. 1, 1933, Nebraska State Historical Archives.

13. Interview, Mrs. Beechner.

14. Meier, p. 50.

15. Aldrich Society, p. 6.

16. Meier, p. 201.

17. Meier, p. 203.

18. Meier, p. 58.

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LOUISE POUND

Photograph courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society

LOUISE POUND
Renaissance Woman

by Anne M. Cognard

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In "American English Today," Louise Pound begins her discussion with vibrant prose:

> *Before the sixteenth century, that era of adventurous voyaging and world discovery, the English tongue had little interest for those dwelling outside of England. It was spoken in a foggy little island northwest of the European mainland, and the language of King Alfred, Chaucer, and Malory seemed of little importance to others. In the sixteenth century, the century of the Tudor monarchs and of Spenser and Shakespeare, began the colonizings that were to take the English all over the world... one of these, founded along the Atlantic coast, was to develop into the United States of America...*[1]

One hardly expects a philologist with a Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and a dissertation entitled "The Comparison of Adjectives in English in the XV and the XVI Century"[2] to speak about "an era of adventurous voyaging" and "a foggy little island" in a linguistic article on American English. But there you have something of Louise Pound, a scholar of eclectic and notable distinction who could sweep the scholarly world of information with broadened strokes which included in one paragraph the names of Shakespeare and Alfred, the sixteenth century, the founding of the United States, and an intimacy of description and feeling. In the "Foreword" to *Selected Writings of Louise Pound,*[3] Arthur Kennedy writes that Pound's bibliography shows a "surprising range and multiplicity of publications, on Old English, Middle English, American literature and folklore, contemporary usage, Americanisms, etc." Kennedy wisely notes, though, that "a mere reprinting of some of her publications falls far short of giving an adequate idea of the importance of her contributions to American study." Indeed, Louise Pound is more than scholar, more than notable teacher, more than an honored athlete. She has the unique gift of traversing time and prose subject in order to speak to those who read her. She warrants study because she has a mind worth listening to; she warrants knowing because she is (to modernize and particularize Quintilian) a "good woman speaking well."

Born in 1872 in Lincoln, Pound was educated by her mother until she entered the University of Nebraska preparatory Latin school from which she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (1892) and a Master of Arts (1895) and a diploma in music. She then finished a doctorate at Heidelberg, passing her examination magna cum laude in two instead of the expected seven semesters. Later, she said that completing her doctorate was the hardest thing she ever did.

Not only was Pound an accomplished student and scholar, but she was also an excellent athlete.[4] At eighteen, Pound was the Lincoln City Tennis Champion; in 1891 and again in 1892, she won the University of Nebraska title over men; in 1897 she won the Women's Western Tennis Championship and in 1900 the Championship of Heidelberg. In 1916, Pound won the state golf championship and was, in fact, a golf champion over twenty-five years. She won a medal in 1906 for "century runs," i.e., cycling one hundred miles in twelve hours. She was a figure skater on ice; she introduced skiing to Lincoln. Pound was also coach, captain, and player of the University's Women's Basketball team. Needless to say, she is honored in the University of Nebraska Sports Hall of Fame.

During the first world war, Louise Pound served on the Women's Committee of the State Council of Defense, was acting head of the National League for Women's Service in 1918, chairperson of Overseas Relief, a member of the Food for France committee, D.A.R., Phi Beta Kappa, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Theta Sigma Phi, Chi Delta Phi, Sigma Tau Delta, Delta Omicron, Alpha Lambda Delta, Delta Kappa Gamma, Phi Gamma Mu, Mortar Board. She founded the journal *American Speech.*

At eighty-two, Pound was elected the first woman president of the Modern Language Association; she contributed to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and was an advisory board member of the *New England Quarterly, American Literature Southern Folklore Quarterly, College English.* She functioned as a guest lecturer at the University of California, Yale, University of Chicago, Columbia, and Stanford. In addition to all of her work with scholarly associations, Pound enjoyed a prolific writing career. From all accounts, she was also an exceptionally fine teacher.

One asks, "Is it possible?" "Can one person have done and been so much?" A mere recitation of Pound's accomplishments is staggering. In response, one thinks of such words as "eclectic," "versatile," "prolific," and "accomplished." Yet, Louise Pound's effect on American studies, on scholarship, on women in sports, and on Nebraska does not rest in a list of her accomplishments. She not only illustrates the Quintilian dictum of "good 'woman' speaking well"; she also shows Buffon's "style is the 'woman'"!

The Literary Work

In trying to determine why Louise Pound is effective, one must come to know her writings well. Pound made history because she was a careful, thinking scholar who possessed extraordinary insights about her subjects. As a prose stylist, Pound is eminently readable. She writes so very well. Her writing style explains in large part why she is a continuing, living presence among notable Nebraska women. Pound achieved that fragile and rare balance between form and function. The ethos presented through her prose is that of a credible "knower." Her strong, almost curt, solid prose style demands reader attention. Indeed, she uses her style to educate.

How Pound says what she has to say illustrates her scholarly predilections as well as her vitality. Her style is versatile; she has, both in terms of her material/content and in terms of her approach in diction, analyses, and organization, a most expansive mind. Her writings, like her life, show expertise--of championship quality--in a considerable number of areas of interests. Yet, even given the variety of topics and scholarly pursuits of Pound, there are explainable scholarly links among her interests. Her writings *in toto* are like a muscial composition. Her own description of Walt Whitman's poems ("Whitman and Italian Music") could well be applied to the totality of Pound's works.

> *Some might indeed find in the structure of his [Whitman's] more elaborate poems something orchestral and symphonic. . . As does a sonata or symphony, his poems not infrequently present a main motive, with amplification, balance and distribution, repetition and recapitulation. The inner progress is now delayed, now pushed forward; there are auxiliary parts and contrasting movements. In the scale of the composition, in the manner of exposition, and in the working out and building up of mood, there is often something that may fairly be termed symphonic. But then we have to do here only with analogy.*[5]

Pound's style is a measured, deliberate, and balanced prose (the "amplification" through recapitulation" phrase above), paralleled and centered (the repetition of "now," the repeated "in" phrases), cautious ("there is often something that may fairly be"), and immanently sensible. ("But, of course, we have to do here only with analogy.") Let's, then do some stylistic roaming around the pages of Louise Pound.

Diction

As a philologist, Pound studied words, and, as one might expect, words played a considerable part in how she approached literature and in the kind of prose she wrote. Her own words tend to be dominant, strong, forceful, Anglo-Saxon words. As a medievalist, she certainly knew early English and literature. That knowledge is reflected in her own style. Given a choice, she inevitably chose the precise, short, tight word that made for a similar style. Although wordy in the number of words she chose and in the restatement of ideas, she was, nevertheless, exact in individual word selection. Occasionally, one finds "jitterbug writing" ("American English Today")[6] or some other startling example of a contemporary word. But that is unusual. What is usual stylistically for her follows below:

> *The speech of James Fenimore Cooper's frontiersman, Nathaniel Bumppo, he of the sobriquets Leather-Stocking Deerslayer, Hawkeye, Pathfinder, La Longue Carabine, is far from being the most important feature of this characterization. Yet it has no little interest for present-day students of speech, an interest that is partly historic and partly intrinsic* ("The Dialect of Cooper's Leather-Stocking")[7]
>
> *The superstition that to name a thing is to gain power over it seems to receive little credence when death and its trappings are concerned* ("American Euphenisms for Dying, Death, and Burial: An Anthology")[8]
>
> *Once more my purpose in this paper has been to express regret that the accounts of the English ballads species that are presented to students and teachers in contemporary anthologies are not abreast of the times; and to protest against the ignoring of chronological considerations in the selection of individual ballad texts for period placement* ("Literary Anthologies and the Ballad")[9]
>
> *Whitman humanizes birds as Chaucer did not long before him. But he realizes their tragedies, not merely their joys* ("Whitman and Bird Poetry")[10]
>
> *In the Idylls, Modred is the slayer of the king, but is not the real wrecker of the kingdom* ("Tennyson's 'Lancelot and Elaine' ")[11]
>
> *On the whole, the influence of folk-transmission is a levelling influence. It conventionalizes according to traditions* ("American Ballads and Songs")[12]
>
> *But our sounds and accentuation are too different from the Greek for English hexameter lines to give an adequate idea of*

> *the music and movement of Homer's* ("The Iliad by Homer")[13]

This cursory view of her diction suggests a lack of interest in colorful or melodious words, little in the way of description, no appeal to touch or taste, or smell, no latinate constructions or foreign usage. Instead, her words are intellectual, repetitive, and cautious, but exact. Pound has something to say; she says it as precisely as she can; she qualifies where necessary, but that's rare; she depends on nouns, not adjectives, on colorless verbs of trade and work, not on adverbs.

It is not surprising that Pound's diction works for her. In the place of typical literary analysis of cumulative meaning, interpretation, long quoted passages, and sensitive renderings, Pound analyzes dictionally and etymologically. In a review on *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles,* Part V, for example, in *The Saturday Review,* Pound, a most unusual reviewer, begins humorously via an acknowledgement of words: "Of the twenty or more fascicles that will constitute the completed Dictionary of American English, the fifth . . . came from the press in December, 1938. Its label, Chub-Eel to Corn Patch, is not so exciting as that of the second part, Baggage Smasher to Blood, or of the third, Blood and Thunder to Butterfly."[14] Later, in the same review, Pound takes the opportunity to speak about words and their relationship to learning.

In her article on "Word-Carnage and Modern Trade-Names, Pound speaks with the knowledge about the place of words in her contemporary America; "No doubt the widespread present-day freedom in the handling of language, especially in the launching of new words or the modification of old, derives to some extent from our increased self-consciousness regarding speech and its processes."[15] She discusses the language of ancient Greece in her introduction to *The Iliad,* which she edited. She suggests in "The Future of Poetry" that "poetry is the most beautiful form of human speech,"[16] a sound of auditory expression of poetic meaning. In *The Beginnings of Poetry,*[17] Pound defines song vs. ballad dance by giving us definitional analysis. And, similarly, in *Poetic Origins and the Ballad,*[18] she carefully delineates the name "ballad" qua word. In "American English Today," she choose Gertrude Stein for special emphasis because Stein is "America's leading experimenter" who defined writing as "the choosing of words to go next to each other" and poetry as "the caressing, the completely caressing addressing of nouns."[19] Pound's literary analysis of Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine" centers on Tennyson's use of an archaic vocabulary and on the etymology of "idyll."[20] She suggests in her edition of Whitman's *Specimen Days, Democratic Vistas, and Other Prose* that Whitman's words must be heard and that the oral nature of his poetry allowed his words to be a "living impluse," creating "a new poetical dialect of English, plastic and suggestive."[21] In "Folklore and Dialect," she makes the point that "Europeans have sometimes remarked that Americans have an obsession for definition and classification. One hopes this is true."[22] In "On the Dating of the English and Scottish Ballads," Pound maintains the need for precise dictional understanding when she says, "It is as unscientific to speak sweepingly of "the ballads" as it is to speak of the body of English sonnets from four centuries as "the sonnets."[23] She, of course, knew and studied words themselves (*Blends;* "Extensions of Usage of a Pronoun," "Comparison of Adjectives," folk terms, place names, "Notes on Certain Negative Verbs," "The Pluralization of Latin Loan-Words in Present-Day American Speech").[24] That is not the point, however. Rather, note her use of word sensitivity in areas, such as literary criticism, that do not often demand a dictional approach. Further, note the effect of this on her own style. The conclusion seems apparent--her own prose, reflective of her scholarly and personal interest in diction, is detailed and quite, quite specific, focused and meticulous. The basis of her significance as a scholar rests at least partially on her enthymemic, analytical strength, a strength of exactitude.

Structure

If Pound's diction is forceful, her structure is disorganized. If her strength of prose and of meaning is in the specific and in the detailed, her organizational qualities tend to center on single matters presented one after another. The total effect is the indisputability of the individual rather than the movement from piece to piece to create a whole. Yet, the end result of prose built upon point overlaid on point is something to behold. It's a form that represents her own function, for she's an elitist in the way John Adams was an elitist, a believer in excellence. Her attitude toward folk ballads amply illustrates this. To disavow the communal theory of ballad composition, Pound uses, as one piece of evidence, the fact that as ballads develop, they tend toward the more garrulous, losing precision and newness as that happens. A further example comes when one compares early English and Scottish ballads with their rendering in America. The nobility and aristocratic characters and episodes are slowly eroded in the American versions to the point where simple people and common ways are sung about.

Pound's strong preference is for the individual, not for the group. When she recounts in *Nebraska Folklore*[25] cave lore or snake lore or rain lore, she tells the story of a specific place and all her folk tales are recountings by specific people. Her glorification of Whitman centers, I think, on his individualizing the soul of America. And when she speaks of the English curriculum, the entire focus is on a curriculum that is not merely or exclusively "preoccupied with the present" ("The Use and Abuse of the Contemporary in the Teaching of English").[26] Her elitist view is a view of quality, and quality for her occurs in the utterance that can be self-sustained and dissectingly probed. Thus, she's rather abominable in moving from one idea to the next idea in her own prose. She is just as apt to conclude on a new idea as she is to recapitulate the whole. When she does recapitulate the essay, she usually does it mechanically and in a numbered manner. Often, she recounts the points in a fairly pedantic way. Thus, she can be cumbersomely repetitive. This characteristic of her prose has led Kenneth Goldstein in the Foreword to *American Ballads and Songs* to say, "In the final analysis one can complain only that [Louise Pound's] Introduction suffers from being wordy and repetitious."[27] *In Poetic Origins and the Ballad,* for example, she states five or six times the disregard she has for Prof. Gummere's communal theory;[28] in "American English Today" she repeats without variation her views on the English Conference held in London in 1927.[29] Thus, her general dispositional structure would gain her a "C" in the average freshman course with a teacher's note that she must re-read the chapter on unity, coherence, emphasis, and the significance of a total plan to good writing.

Her lack of total pattern is, however, her strength. She exemplifies the particular as paramount. Her structural style is distinct. More than that, it's forceful, almost bombarding, and it requires the reader to equalize ideas and parallelisms for him or herself. The following example demonstrates the total effect on the reader of this kind of style. It's from Pound's introduction to *The Iliad:*

> *The 'Iliad' presents clear pictures of human passions and deeds. The primary interest of the characters is war, war which is dreadful and protracted, yet which holds a spell for its participants. The poem reflects also the politics, social manners, and religious and moral ideas of its participants. The age is an age of feudal kings and subservient peoples. The heroic leader is the chief reliance of his subjects. There are councils and assemblies, but the common people have no real power and no real weight. The tide of the battles forming the primary interest flows backward and forward. In the background are the blazing watchfires, the encampment on the plains, the sea beaches, the black ships. The scenes of war contrast with pictures of domestic loss or sorrow. Motives are simplified, but some of the best virtues of the race are revealed. Men are roused by good motives as well as bad. They die fighting bravely. They may be part savage, yet they show chivalry and sympathy, and they express noble sentiments. Conscious law or morality may play no great role, but here is ethical feeling. Sensitiveness to the pathos of man's brief tumultuous life is shown. The characters abide by their word and they show generous spirit. Enemies are not tortured and prisoners are rarely abused. The mutilation of the body of a dead enemy is no fine thing. The Homeric world is very real and it is often very moving.*[30]

A purist would recoil at the number of new topics introduced in the passage above, at the lack of transitional material, at the dearth of examples to "prove" the point, at the lack of critical analysis of "meaning," at the lack of sentence variety, at the almost exclusive dependence on a subject-verb-object sentence type, at the simple sentence exclusivity, and at the colorless words and undramatic form. When a critic looks only at the whole, distantly, he or she is absolutely correct. Something, though, "works" in this prose. Read it aloud and the almost Homeric flavor of Pound begins to come through. A reader becomes aware of the power that such structure creates, a power enhanced by the obvious sentiment, in fact passion, demonstrated in the ideals Pound appreciates. The weight of the society of ancient Greece resounds in these lines. The "argument" of the prose is of the "strong, silent type," expected, suggested, named, but not continued. Like the society of being described, the prose has its own solidarity and stature that "is." And it has common sense, a recognition by the writer that the change from active to passive voice and to a Germanic end-verb in the "mutilation" sense creates the balanced delicacy that gives both the society described and the prose stylist describing it an antiquarian finesse. Thus, the final sentence has the dominance of the whole not because it concludes the whole, but because the separate parts make sense. Perhaps in structure, Pound's prose illustrates a point she herself made in "The Value of English Linguistics to the Teacher": The consideration of a multiplicity of details (though command of details and accuracy in details are always important) may well be subordinated to the establishment of main lines and the opening up of new fields."[31]

Audience Adaptation

Probably the center of a teacher's effectiveness is in his or her ability to know the students and their needs, and then to adapt the content of the information to those needs. Communication is not simply this, but a large part of effective communication rests here, as Aristotle recognized in the *Rhetoric*, with the knowing of one's audience. Pound was a fine classroom teacher. Her student, who wrote the Foreword to Pound's *Selected Writings*, says as much. And as a writer, Pound is once again a teacher. One reason is her awareness of those outside herself. Pound sometimes lapses into solipsisms instead of teaching (her piece on "The History of English Literature: What It Is and What It Is Not"[32] illustrates this.). But on the whole, however, Pound stands well. In her essay "Emerson As A Romanticist" she says, "Literature is, on the whole, a social product. An author needs for his highest imaginative reach the stimulus and the encouragement of an audience"; then she goes on to cite George Sand--"An Author writes for everybody, for all those who need to be initiated. When one is not understood, one submits and recommences; when one is understood, one rejoices and continues... What is art without the hearts and the intelligences to which it ministers?"[33] Pound's prose style would suggest that she believed these words. Indeed, one of her condemnations of Emerson is that he's unresponsive to social questions. Thus, the ideas that intrigue about Pound at this point are, What makes *her* live? Who would want to read the scholarly works of a specialist in fifteenth century linguistics? How does she appeal to an audience?

Certainly, one reason that Pound's works are read is that her subject matter ranges from the highly specialized (*Blends: Their Relationship to English Word Foundation*--"The test of intentionalness, as between analogical and blend formations, is sometimes but not always of value")[34] to general essays on the nature of education, the place of women in graduate schools, the changes in college curriculum, and other similar subjects. Her subjects also tend toward the homespun in her folklore interests and in her writings on ballads and songs. As Kennedy says in the *The Selected Writings of Lousie Pound*, "The same sound methods and careful scholarship have been applied by her to the modern materials that she earlier devoted to Early English."[35] Kennedy's statement is accurate. Pound's study of folklore is rigorous scholarship. Nevertheless, the fact that the subject is folk-song, Indian lore, ballads, and the like means a certain innate interest on the part of a larger readership than if the subject were "The Systematic Use of Negative Imagery in the Works of John Lyly." Specifically, Louise Pound was writing about *American* authors and *Nebraska* folk ways at a time when scholars in the field of English studied seriously only English writers and classical Greek literature. The fields pioneered by Pound were less respectable. Yet, because of the sound accuracy of her scholarship, she brought significance to these fields. She was a scholarly purist, but her interests were widespread, and her intellectual curiosity began with the fields and flowers, the native grasslands and vistas, the ethnic stories and folk songs of her own roots, Nebraska. And, she surprises us by her common sense. Not only did Pound know her material and her place, she is also on solid ground looking at the world about her. For example, in *Poetic Origins of the Ballad*,[36] she sees that those around her, the populace, dance and sing to inherited songs that speak of their own here and now; then she makes the analogy to ballad orgins--Is it likely, she asks, that our peasant forebears would be so creative and knowledgeable that they could create *en masse* lyrical pieces about aristocrats and aristocratic values outside of their own lives?

Pound knows her audience, too, because she feels the kinds of emotions they're apt to experience. In *American Ballads and Songs*, Pound states that part of the enjoyment of reading older songs is the occasional "flashes of poetic value," the "wistful beauty" sometimes found there, the "unexpected charm" and "frankness of the narrative." In these descriptions, the facade of English professor and literate vanishes and Pound becomes an appreciative reader who shares with her audience what she has found. This kind of thing occurs in her edition of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" and "The Traveller." There she looks at the Goldsmith who was neither profound nor penetrating but who could be admired for his originality in making domestic life interesting and who "unlike most of his contemporaries" showed a "feeling human element."[38] To Whitman in her edition of "Specimen Days, Democratic Vistas, and Other Prose," Pound accords the same appreciation, that Whitman gave to his readers a "general canvas of the United States" by means of a commitment to "the supreme importance of the individual, faith in humanity, in the goodness and perfectibility of the masses, and an idealistic philosophy bringing a sort of worship of nature and belief in its tonic and edifying nature."[39] Pound responded to those who appreciated a genuineness of feeling. In fact, she herself sought that same genuineness of feeling. In turn, the reader responds to the genuineness of Pound. She was not particulary strong in literary criticism, but she remains a true writer, a person writing honestly about the material that made up her scholarly life. In this way, she maintains an audience for her greatly varied and extensive writings.

Ethos

Finally, to understand Pound as a prose stylist in order to realize her significance to twentieth century America, one must speak about her "ethos," that is, the kind of person she seemed to portray in her writings and correspondence. In "American English Today," Pound says that "the law of life is change and growth."[40] The sound of that may be a bit stuffy, but the sentiment is altogether credible. The first thing one notes about Louise Pound is her credibility. The sheer mass of her scholarly works shows a type of credibility. It is obvious that Pound knows a lot about a lot. In addition, she enters into a subject only when she understands it well. Read any piece that she's written and you're immediately aware that the writer knows what she's talking about. She herself makes the point for knowledge when she says, "If we are to be educated, not half-educated, we need to get outside our own time and place and to read with other eyes" (The Use and Abuse of the Contemporary in the Teaching of English"). [41] She stands for context reading, i.e., understanding the present in the light of history and for detailed information on which to build thinking. For example, Pound's essay on "Oral Literature"[42] begins with a discussion of the social value of songs, Medieval English and Scottish ballads, and the transportation of these ballads to the early American colonies and the Puritan context of these colonies. From there, she begins her discussion of the subject proper. In the "Future of Poetry"[43] she begins, first, with its ancient and modern past and the changes of poetry brought on by the advent of prose, novels, newspapers; only then does she commence her subject. In her piece on "The Value of English Linguistics to the Teacher," Pound says that "in any subject the cultivation of a sense of chronology is desirable."[44] In each of her literary editions or analyses--Goldsmith, Whitman, Emerson, Tennyson and Poe being prime examples--she introduces the subject at a distance. With Tennyson it's the place of

Medieval romance, Celtic sources, the Arthurian stories of Romance chronicles and in French Romances, the Grail cycles, Malory, the later Arthurian stories, and only then, Tennyson. In the *Iliad* it's the story of Troy, the society of the time, Sanskrit epics, Scandinavian epics, the sources of the *Iliad*. And for Whitman it's American social history, development, and change. Pound's view was panoramic; her reach cross-disciplinary; her vision chronicled. She always takes the time to understand where a word comes from or where a subject emanates from. Thus, in "American English Today,"[45] she talks about the first World War and the shift from Europe to America. Only then does she speak of New World tendencies in the langauge. A reader's place is intellectually secured because the author illustrates her brillance by the soundness of her range of knowledge. Thus, she demonstrates her credibility as a writer.

Pound is also sophisticated and detached intellectually. She approaches her subjects almost as an anthropologist would. Her crisp, staunch diction aids in the impression that here is a writer who is serious. She's unbiased, presenting, for example, in the *Iliad* edition both sides of the controversy about communal authorship. She's a spectator, an observer, a detached scholar, not an active participant in the material before her. As such, she engenders belief; as Kenneth Goldstein says of her in the foreword to *American Ballads and Songs*, "It is also to [Pound's] credit that, although a teacher of English Language and literature, she refrained from imposing any ethnocentric esthetic criteria for determining the characteristics of folksongs. . .she deferred to the singer's tastes and what appealed to their 'folk consciousness.'" In the same piece, Pound herself says that her choices for inclusion were not made based on poetic quality but on the "ballads liked by people and lingering among them."[46] Note how she chronicles experience, essentially outside the author, in her statements about "The Future of Poetry": "Among aboriginal tribes today speech is more emotional and melody counts for more than among us. Uncivilized utterance is highly musical."[47] This is an external prose; it tends to suggest objectivity; and objectivity, in turn, encourages believability.

Pound's ethos is also that of a realist. Let one main example suffice. In an essay entitled "The Future of Poetry" written by an English professor, one would expect an exposé of the dissolution of civilization, a bemoaning of the adverse effect of television and radio on poetry, or, in opposite fashion, a charge to mankind to rediscover the poetry of its soul and to express its essence in poetic finery. Not so Pound. She holds out little hope for the future of poetry, but her reasons are economic: she maintains that in literary history, the greats wrote the kind of thing they wrote because that paid ("When novels rose to popularity, when it was they that brought fame and money and commanded most readers, strong minds began to turn to them and to cease composing lyrics and verse romances and verse dramas"[48]). Her essay on "Graduate Work for Women" says about the same thing:

"What brings returns, what is in contemporary demand is what attracts the strongest minds. The able are ambitious, and they go where their ambitions find scope."[49] Now free enterprise may make perfect sense at an economists' meeting on supply-side economics, but one doesn't expect this kind of no-nonsense from an English scholar. The effect on the reader is that he or she believes this writer. In essence, her ethos is a practical one.

Pound also appears to command her prose; she's fond of enumeration, both as an introduction and especially as a conclusion. Such numbered prose suggests to the reader that this writer is analytical and exact; therefore, she is to be believed. In her *PMLA* article on "The Term Communal,"[50] for instance, she concludes with six numbered points. In her article "On the Dating of the English and Scottish Ballads," her last sentence begins, "The purpose of this brief paper. . ."[51] In her preface to *Poetic Origins and the Ballad,* she says, "The leading theses of the present volume are . . ."[52] In her essay, "Cademon's Dream Song," she ends, "It has been the purpose of this note . . ."[53] This enumerative style, combined with internal conclusions and subsectioned designation, says to a reader that the writer is determined and pointed, thus effective.

But perhaps the thing most telling in regard to the creation of an ethos is what I call her "Americanism." That particular trait is seen most obviously in her Whitman edition. But it is also seen in her choice of subject. For example, in *Folk Songs of Nebraska and the Central West,*[54] she writes of the death of material on ballads of American origin. An intimate of Mari Sandoz, Pound writes of the folk-Nebraska that both knew. Pound regards the trend toward democracy as peculiar to America's anxious interest in self in the preservation of popular song and in the whole folklore movement. She describes her contemporary America in word choice, as short and forceful, less leisured. She's willing, without condemnation, to study the language of the streets and the place names of her country, this before anyone knew of Webster's *Third International.* As an American scholar, Pound builds toward an ethos of native commonality. So, the effect of this writer is credible, detached, knowledgeable, analytic, realistic, commanding, and American. That's quite an unbeatable combination.

Whether studying her diction or analyzing her structure or dealing with her abilities to adapt to an audience or ascertaining the ethos she projects as a writer, one is struck by the parts of the whole that make up Louise Pound's scholarly and educational contributions. Like her description of Whitman as a symphonic poet, Pound, too, is a symphonic writer. As a prose stylist, she amply illustrates the fact that readability comes with knowledge, that ballads can be studied when a diploma in music and a Ph.D. in philology combine in practice in Lincoln, Nebraska, in someone who is essentially a teacher with an appreciation for genuineness. Although eclectic, her great variety of interests makes sense: Whitman sings of the common man; the common man is a ballad-maker;

ballads are real; Goldsmith is feeling; ballads are composed by individuals; the *Iliad* may have had a communal beginning; mainly, that all knowledge is intensely pleasurable. Pound's prose reflects that pleasure and her belief that "to learn as much as we can is worthwhile because it makes the world a more interesting place, and life in general more interesting" *(Selected Writings)*.[55]

What kinds of conclusions can be drawn about Louise Pound? Having studied something of how she writes and something of what she writes about, what can be said about the significance of her writing? Pound is not a dabbler, even though she wrote on many subjects. In "What Should be Expected of the Teacher of English?" Pound wrote, "I know of nothing likely to bring more irresponsibility in teaching, more neglect of fundamentals, more that will promote surface knowledge and substitute facile discussion for real acquisition, than too great neglect of the specific for the hortatory."[56] In our age of a little here and a bit there, that statement is itself fairly telling. As scholars, as teachers, as business-people, as consumers, we're apt to read the headlines of life, then go on to what is next. Captured by time but having lost a sense of internal rhythm, we're all apt to live Polonius in another fashion. Instead of a little knowledge being a dangerous thing, we're more likely to tell that our little knowledge is a necessary thing, the implication being that there's nothing else. We tend to block the total for the quick, the picture that changes rapidly. But Pound not only was not hortatory, she was a specialist in a considerable number of areas: folklore, obviously and Old and Middle English, linguistics, the history of the languages, contemporary usage and Americanisms, poetic origins, ballads, songs, music, folklore, American and British pronunciations, dialects, Negro spirituals, trade names and dream lore, literary criticism, sounds, educational philosophy, curriculum studies, women in education. That's but a sampling; she was the Olympic-caliber medal winner in all of these areas. Apparently, she brought to her studies the same ideal of Greek excellence that she brought to sports, an ideal that demanded of the body and of the spirit a sophrosyne, a taut and self-appreciating reliance on an internal standard. And it is for this that she can be called a Renaissance woman. Pound was unusual by two measures: her accomplishments (she was, after all, just a school teacher who happened also to be much more) and her place in a time period. In the early twentieth century, women generally did not earn doctorates nor become scholars. Sixty years later, Louise Pound would have been less unique. The memory of her place in Nebraska will remain.

Take, for example, the field of education. In 1920 Pound was concerned about the relativism of curriculum, the criteria for courses based soley on student choice and a presentist viewpoint. She was talking in 1922 about a time when women would no longer need to "assent resignedly to the statement from those in control of appointments that the reason few women are given academic appointments is that 'no women of ability are to be had'" ("Graduate Work for Women").[57]

Sixty years later the point seems to be made for the first time. She was truly ahead of her time. That is the spirit with which she delved into folklore. She took on the scholarly greats when she presented her utterly common sense notion of the individual authorship of ballads, and she used Indian societies, this in 1917, to prove her point.

It is worth a moment to replay some of these early points about ballads, songs, the origin of the ballad. The prevalent theory was that ballads, the earliest form of poetry, were communal in composition and arose from primitive dance. "No," says Pound. Individuals aren't made that way, not to mention that textual evidence suggests otherwise. Accepting the general social inspiration of song, Pound attacks the notion that dance, music, and song are inseparable, that a simultaneous mass composition was the genesis of primitive song, that primitive song was mass owned, that early song was narrative not lyric in character, and that no primitive, individual artist existed. "Quite the opposite," says Pound, looking around her. What lives now are memorable songs, not those mass produced. As songs progress from inception to use, they get worse. Narrative is a sophisticated, artistic form, an advanced stage. "Perhaps," she concludes, "the real beginning of the ballad is religious--church music--not secular at all."

Certain points can be seen in Pound's work. They tell us a great deal about the worth of Louise Pound's scholarship. First, she's not willing to accept what is presented to her just because it's there. She reads to know, but then she observes about her to think. She's also a field scholar, not just a theoretician. And when she has a position to take, she does so fairly dramatically: "The mere fact that the mediaeval throngs are supposed to have danced while they sang, whereas modern cowboys, lumbermen, ranchmen, or negroes do not, should not have endowed the mediaeval muse with such striking superiority of product" (*The Beginnings of Poetry*).[50] And this leads to some notable conclusions about primitive peoples--those with [illegible] most vigorous minds and best memories are more apt to compose and retain ballads than are the unlettered. Excellence will out. There's no value at all in highlighting the primitive or the illiterate because the one is old and the other is romanticized. As Pound says in "The Term Communal, 'Obviously, conscious effort, cool judgement, and creative intelligence are gifts of men, not of mobs.'"[50] You can see where this leads--in all areas it leads to a scholarly belief in excellence. Pound is an elitist, not because she is educated and not because she's a snob, but because she, like Jefferson, is willing to accept a natural aristocracy. She's not at all egalitarian. But she is iconoclastic. She'll look for excellence among the folklore of Nebraska caves as readily as in a study of the *Iliad*. She is a revolutionary scholar in that she can look simultaneously at both the accepted in literary scholarship and the unknown, hold the two together, and make a judgement of effect based solely on intelligent observation. Her "Nebraska Cave Lore" gets its inspiration from Alph, Coleridge's sacred river that "ran/Through caverns measureless to man/Down to a sunless sea."

Perhaps in all of this discussion, the one conclusion that can be drawn is that Pound, like Emerson and Whitman, believed in the individual and "in fostering a race of individuals"[60] *(Walt Whitman: Specimen Days, Democratric Vistas, and Other Prose).* She herself was the kind of individual who looked about her, thoroughly appreciated what was offered there and then partook of it. For although she is specific in her subject matters and locale, her real themes are those of the creative artist, themes of love and death, of beauty, of the products of mankind that have lived, of the kinds of people we are and how we have achieved what we have from what went before us. She asks the questions of all times, the grand questions of Who am I? What kind of life do I create? What do I believe in and why? What will I live for? These are the questions that make life, words, literature, pronunciations, education interesting to Louise Pound. And, in turn, it is her writing about those qualities that makes us want to read Dr. Pound. In her own way, Pound creates a new vocabulary for scholarship. She is a prose stylist of rather singular qualities. She remains intact even after almost a hundred years from the time of her birth. She is strangely dignified and formal. She is noble in her assertions. She, thus, remains a symbol for Nebraskans, like the State Capitol and like Hartley Burr Alexander, like Cather, Sandoz, and Neihardt, like the interstate sculpture projects and the historic murals in small towns all over the state, a symbol of the movement and of the place that produced her and out of which she nurtured universality.

Notes

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2. Louise Pound, *The Comparison of Adjectives in English in the XV and the XVI Century* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitatsbuchlandlung, 1901).

3. Arthur Kennedy, "Foreword," *Selected Writings,* Louise Pound (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1949), p. x.

4. Evelyn Haller, "Louise Pound, June 30, 1872-June 28, 1958, Scholar, Teacher, Athlete," *Notable American Women: The Modern Period, A Biographical Dictionary,* eds. Barbara Sucherman, et al. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknaps Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 557.

5. Louise Pound, "Whitman and Italian Music," *Selected Writings, p. 11.*

6. Louise Pound, "American English Today," p. 114.

7. Louise Pound, "The Dialect of Cooper's Leather Stocking," *Selected Writings,* p. 164.

8. Louise Pound, "American Euphemisms for Dying, Death, and Burial: An Anthology," *Selected*

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9. Louise Pound, "Literary Anthologies and the Ballad," *Selected Writings,* p. 46.

10. Louise Pound, "Whitman and Bird Poetry," *Selected Writings,* p. 30.

11. Louise Pound, ed., *Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine"* (Lincoln: American School Supply Co., 1905), p. xxi.

12. Louise Pound, *American Ballads and Songs* (New York: Charles Schribner's Songs, 1922), p. xxi.

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17. Louise Pound, *The Beginnings of Poetry* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1917), pp. 201-232.

18. Louise Pound, *Poetic Origins and the Ballad* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), pp. 39-46.

19. Louise Pound, "American English Today," *Studies for William A. Read,* pp. 112-113.

20. Louise Pound, ed., *Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine,"* p. xix.

21. Louise Pound, *Walt Whitman's Specimen Days, Democratic Vistas, and Other Prose* (Garden City, NY, Doubleday, Dorand Co., Inc., 1955), p. xxviii.

22. Louise Pound, *Selected Writings,* p. 211.

23. Louise Pound, "On the Dating of the English and Scottish Ballads," *Selected Writings,* p. 202.

24. Louise Pound, *Blends, Their Relation to English Word Formation* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitatsbuchhandlung, 1914), pp. 1-27; "Extensions of Usage of a Pronoun," *Selected Writings,* pp. 324-325; "Comparison of Adjectives," Ibid; "Notes on Certain Negative Verb Contractions in the Present." *The University Studies of the University of Nebraska,* Vol. III (Lincoln: University Press, 1903) pp. 407 ff; "The Pluralization of Latin Loan-Words in Present-Day American Speech," *Selected Writings,* pp. 178-183.

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28. *Poetic Origins of the Ballad,* pp. 1-27.

29. "American English Today," pp. 109-124.

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33. Louise Pound, "Emerson as a Romanticist," *The Mid-West Quarterly,* Vol. II (January, 1915), p. 184.

34. *Blends*, p. 7.

35. *Selected Writings*, p. xi.

36. *Poetic Origins of the Ballad*, pp. 1-35

37. *American Ballads and Songs*, p. xii.

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44. "The Value of English Linguistics to the Teacher," *Selected Writings*, p. 276.

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46. *American Ballads and Songs*, pp. ix, xvii.

47. "The Future of Poetry," p. 58.

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49. Louise Pound, "Graduate Work for Women," *School and Society*, XV:378 (May 27, 1922), p. 576.

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54. Louise Pound, *Folk Songs of Nebraska and the Central West: A Syllabus*, intro. Addison E. Sheldon, *Nebraska Academy of Sciences Publications*, IX:3 (1915).

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56. "What Should Be Expected of the Teacher of English?" *Selected Writings*, p. 307.

57. "Graduate Work for Women," p. 575.

58. *The Beginnings of Poetry*, p.232

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ROSE ROSICKY
Photograph from the January 1, 1941 issue of Hospodar

ROSE ROSICKY

by Marjorie Sobotka

Marjorie Sobotka researched her family genealogy for 15 years, and became interested in Czech history since she and her husband are of Czech background. Rose Rosicky captured her attention when Sobotka rediscovered the book, History of Czechs in Nebraska, *and decided to index it for an all-name index. The Eastern Nebraska Genealogical Society chose to reprint this book with the index added. Margie Sobotka is a member of this society. She wrote an article on Czech Research and its problems for the magazine,* Journal of Genealogy. *She has translated and published through the society articles of Czech interest.*

In October of the year of 1925, Rose Rosicky began to compile a history of the Czech people in Nebraska. Since she traveled extensively with her father, Jan Rosicky, and also acted as his secretary, she felt the need to collect and compile her stories of these immigrant people who came to and stayed in Nebraska. The book, *History of Czechs* (Bohemians) *in Nebraska,* was originally printed in the Czech language; later (about 1929) Rosicky translated the book into English and added extra chapters. At the time of the printing, Nebraska historians proclaimed the book as one of the most complete histories of one facet of immigrants coming into Nebraska. Rosicky drew not only on her first-hand memories, but on the work of others who cooperated with her and sent much information about the individual counties.

From the time that Rose was a young girl, she worked with her very prominent father, Jan Rosicky, who was one of the stalwarts of the Czech immigrants and a friend to many who sought his help. He purchased the

Czech newspaper, *Pokrok Zapadu* (Progress of the West), in 1879 from Edward Rosewater; in 1891, he founded the *Hospodar* (the Farmer) newspaper and periodical. Through these news periodicals, he kept in touch with the Czech people and they with him. The publishing company he established was know as the National Printing Company.

Her father wasn't the only journalist in the family. Her mother, Marie (Bayer) Rosicky, published a cookbook for the Czech people containing recipes of the 'old country,' many of which would have been forgotten had it not been for the foresight of her mother to record the information and print it. Many recipes had been handed down through the generations, and since the immigrant Czechs could bring very little with them, they had to depend on their memory for much of the food preparation. In 1941, Rose decided to translate the Czech cookbook into English, believing the younger generation was losing touch with the Czech language. The English version of this book is still in print.

Both of Rose's parents were born in Czechoslovakia, but they were married in Omaha, Nebraska, on 30 September, 1874. Jan Rosicky was in partnership in a business in Crete, Nebraska, at the time, and this is where Rose was born on 22 July, 1875. The family then moved to Omaha in March of 1876 when her father became interested in writing and publishing.

Rose's father, Jan, died 2 April, 1910, and she, his secretary and 'right hand man', was thrust into the managerial position at the National Printing Company. She was the only one of the four children interested in the literary skills and publishing business of her father, and had worked with her father since she was a very young girl. Her brother, Jan, Jr., was working for the telephone company at this time, and her brother, Walter, worked with his father to some extent but was not interested in the position. Her sister, Emma, was a school teacher. Rosicky not only began managing the publishing company, but also became editor-in-chief of the *Hospodar* and other publications of the printing company.

Some of her first columns as editor were Zenska Hlidka (Women's Outlook) in the newspaper, Osveta (Enlightenment), and Zensak Bisdku (Women's Conversation), a column in the *Hospodar.* She wrote these articles under the pseudonym of 'Pani Ucitelova' (Mrs. Teacher). It was after she started writing these columns that she began to translate English articles into Czech, which were published in the Czech newspapers. Her translations were so numerous that one can find her name on articles in almost every issue of the *Hospodar.* Some were articles written by persons who could not write Czech, and were submitted for publication; some were articles chosen by Rose Rosicky which she felt were worthy of translating into the Czech language.

In later years, she would translate some of the early writings of contributors in the Czech papers into English for the younger generation to read. These most often appeared in a lodge magazine called the *Fraternal Herald,* which was an organ of the Z.C.B.J. lodges. This organization today is known as Western Fraternal Life Association, a fraternal insurance organization for Czech people. Her expertise at translating English into Czech and Czech into English led her to the translation of books into Czech to appear as serials in the newspapers. *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson, appeared in the *Osveta Americke* (American Enlightenment), and *The Price of the Prairie* by Margaret Hill McCarter appeared in *Kvety Americke* (American Blossoms). She was one of the few people who could readily translate the one language into the other with ease.

In addition, she translated into English the works of K.V. Rais, Gabriela Preis, Bozena Vik-Keneticky, Ruzena Svoboda, and Jakub Arbese for the *Fraternal Herald* so that the young people who could not read Czech would have some knowledge of Czech literature. It would be an almost impossible task to list the many articles and stories she wrote or translated as editor-in-chief of the publications.

She was well-known among the Americans for her literary ability and had belonged to the Omaha Press Club and served as its president for several years. She knew Willa Cather, and kept in contact with her through the years. In Will Cather's novel, *My Antonia*, the good neighbors of the fictitious family were the 'Rosicky' family, an indication of the friendship shared by Cather and Rosicky.

When she became editor-in-chief at her father's death, she found that newspaper editing was a nerve-wracking job, and since Rose suffered sleeplessness from her very young days, this work only added to her nervousness. At one time, she said of herself, that if it had depended only on her vote, she would not have undertaken the responsibility of her father's printing company. But because she was the eldest child, had worked so closely with her father as his secretary, and was the most knowledgeable, she accepted the challenge. She worked hard to get along with the other co-editors of the several publications of the printing company. Many times there would be dissension among the editors when deadlines had to be met, and she would take the situation in hand and settle the matters with diplomacy and patience.

During this period of publication, there was more glory than money for the writers as well as the editors. The readers seemed to demand more of the news, but failed to keep their subscription dues up to date, which left the company with low funds. As a result, a financial crisis arose. Despite the financial pressure, staff worked far into the night in order to get the periodicals out on time.

Soon after World War I, the *Osveta Americke* (American Enlightment), was discontinued and not long after the the *Kvety Americke* (American Blossoms), too, was discontinued. This lightened the work load for Rose, and her job became a little easier.

In November, 1918 she was dealt a personal blow from which she never quite recovered. Her sister, Emma, died quite suddenly of "Spanish Flu," an epidemic so prevalent at the time. Rose and her younger sister, who was a school teacher in the Omaha school system, had planned and dreamed of making a home for themselves with a flower garden and a cozy kitchen, and of living a peaceful existence. But with the death of her sister, this existence lasted only a short time. Friends and relatives gave their support, and even her church, the First Unitarian, couldn't ease her burden, so she sought to involve herself with her nieces and nephews to help overcome her depression.

In June of 1919, she took a trip to Montana, again to help ease the loss of her sister. She wrote of her trip in a later issue of the *Hospodar*, and although she enjoyed the trip and wrote of the many happy memories, it didn't provide the relief to lessen her depression. After this trip, she buried herself in the work of translating the *History of the United States* by S.E. Forman, into the Czech language, and when she finished the book, she dedicated the book to her dead sister, Emma.

It was after this period, that she started gathering her material for her epic, *History of Czechs in Nebraska*. Drawing on her memories of extensive travel with and devoted attention to her father, Rose began to record descriptions of Czech lives in the Midwest. At the time it was printed, she expressed the belief that the book should have been wirtten many years before, so as to record actual interviews with settlers.

After the book was printed in Czech and later revised in the English language, the Great Depression came. She was, by this time, Secretary of the National Printing Company, and the National Building Company, and took on added financial worries as director of the organizations. Her insomnia steadily worsened and she couldn't fall asleep without the aid of medication. She began having trouble with her eyes and this depressed her even more, since her great loves were reading and writing.

During the interim period, she transferred some of the duties to the other editors to relieve the pressure on herself, but one of her most dependable editors, Stanley Serpan, died, and she once again had to take over the complete editing of the *Hospodar*. Her vision worsened to the point that in 1946, the National Printing Company, and the *Hospodar* had to be sold.

When her editing worries ended, she was in her seventies, but she said later that she felt younger and could sleep without medical help. It was then she decided to have surgery on one eye for cataract removal. After the operation, she waited patiently to be fitted for glasses so that she could read again, an activity which still remained her great love. But she was dealt another blow. The glasses didn't improve her vision and complications prevented improvement in the eye. Ironically, after the operation, her one good eye improved. Her friends tried to make her feel happier by telling her that there were many people in the world who had lost the sight of an eye, but conducted their lives normally. At first, her greatest worry was that she would eventually become totally blind, and unable to read at all. She then apparently came to terms with her affliction, and began telling stories of her younger days, and related many humorous incidents throughout her life.

Although she was very busy with the printing company, she did have some outside interests. She was in the canteen service, ARC, during World War I, and served as Secretary of the Western District of 'The Bees,' an organization which aided the Czech soldiers. She belonged to the Nebraska State Historical Society, Nebraska Czech Historical Society, Omaha Women's Press Club, J.C.D. (an organization for Czech women in the WOW organization), Unitarian Church Activities, and the Z.C.B.J. lodge. She also did fancy needlework as well as pursue her reading and writing.

Until her death, her mind remained alert and active, and she could remember every detail of her life. Some of her memories were published in the annual *Hospodar* in 1949 where she was pictured with her nieces and nephews. One of the children of her brother, Walter lived with her until her death.

Rose departed from this life at the age of 78 years and six months, on 17 January, 1954. She was buried in the family plot in Bohemian National Cemetery in Omaha, Nebraska. She had lived most of her life unobtrusively in neighborhood surroundings, and lived a simple life at home. Her many friends and compatriots felt sad that she couldn't have been honored and recognized for her literary work while she was still living. She devoted her life through her volunteer work and her writings to the Czechs in Omaha and in Nebraska. In fact, all Czech Americans throughout the United States thought highly of her. She was born an American and was a true patriot, but she always had a great interest in, and sympathy and love for the pioneers and immigrants who came into the United States and Nebraska from her parents' fatherland, Czechoslovakia.

She said in her book, *History of Czechs in Nebraska:* "Books of an historical nature often gain value and appreciation with time. If that proves true of this, and descendants of Czech pioneers in Nebraska in future will peruse these pages, I wish to leave, as my message to them, this quotation from the monumental history of Bohemia written by Francis Palacky: 'Were I but a gypsy by birth and the last of that race, I would still deem it my duty to try to perpetuate an honorable mention of it in the annals of mankind.' "

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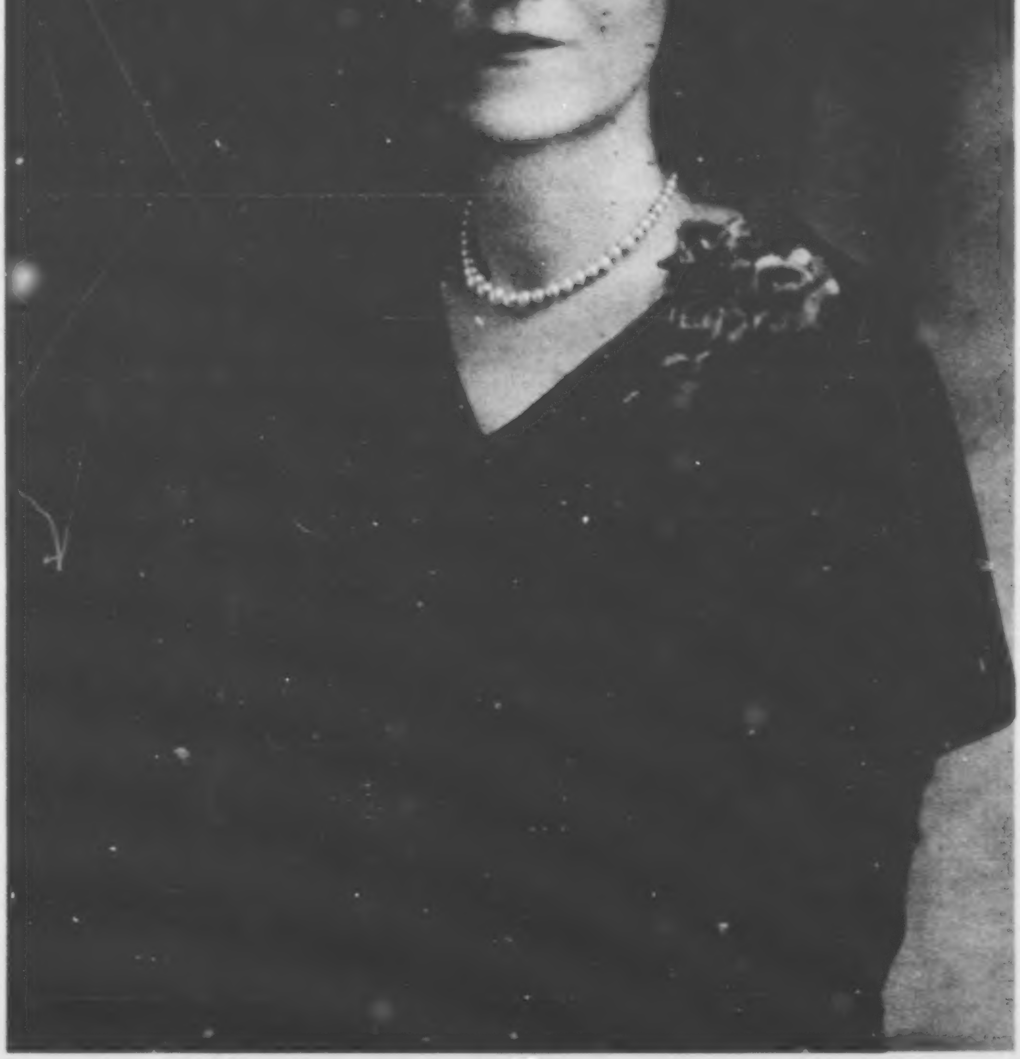


ELIZABETH HONOR DOLAN

Photographs courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society

ELIZABETH HONOR DOLAN

by Connie L. Stevens

Connie L. Stevens is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She majored in English and Art History. Upon graduation in May, 1983, she has continued her studies in Art History. She is also continuing her research on Elizabeth Dolan and is compiling a catalogue of Dolan's paintings.

Thousands of visitors to Lincoln have seen the popular exhibits in "Elephant Hall" in the University of Nebraska State Museum, but how many of them have looked behind the huge skeletons to the walls that provide the backgrounds for these exhibits? How many of these visitors, in short, have looked closely at these large and lovely murals, the work of an ambitious and independent Lincoln artist, Elizabeth Honor Dolan? In 1936, Dolan wrote: "On looking back over the years I feel the same eager enthusiasm to plunge in, inviting beauty to leave even her shadow on the walls where she has not passed before."[1]

Elizabeth Honor Dolan did indeed bring beauty to the city of Lincoln and her state of Nebraska. One need not look very far to find her paintings displayed in the capital city. This seems ironic, since no one has yet compiled a catalogue of her works or written her biography; and not many close friends or close relatives are left to provide firsthand information about the life of this gifted artist. Dolan herself was extremely reluctant to discuss either her work or her life at any length. Even the date of her birth is in dispute.[2] But her niece, Margaret Cannell of Menlo Park, California, states that the correct date is May, 1871. Miss Cannell also observes that "She [Dolan] was completely dedicated to her art, never lost her enthusiasm for her work, and I am sure enjoyed it throughout the years. She was a very generous and outgoing person, making friends easily, interested and caring for people on all levels. Her work is doubtless the best record of her life."[3]

Dolan was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, one of six children born to Mr. and Mrs. John Dolan, immigrants from Ireland. The family moved to Tecumseh, Nebraska, when Dolan was a baby. Later they moved to Lincoln, which she considered her home. Dolan's formal art training began at the University of Nebraska School of Fine Arts in Lincoln, where she attended classes in 1891-1892 and in 1894-1895. Reliable information about the years 1896-1911 is lacking, but Dolan once stated her belief that 1912 was the year of her artistic birth:

> *October, 1912, life opened. Stepping off the train in Chicago, I faced a new world and a new life eagerly. My real life began when I entered the Chicago Art Institute enrolled as a student. Beyond that time I have only vague memories of unhappiness, unfruitful struggles to receive an art education in my effort to become a famous painter. That was then—and still is—my hope. Registering joy, thrills and responsibility, I took my seat in the advanced class, drawing the human figure from life. At the end of the school year I received a scholarship which entitled me to free tuition and following year. In 1913 and 1914 the same, graduating in 1914.*[4]

William M.R. French, for thirty-four years the Director of the Chicago Art Institute, said that during her years there Dolan was "the most talented student he had had in [his] school."[5]

From Chicago, Dolan went on to New York. About this experience, she stated, "With my little diploma from the Chicago Art Institute to give me courage I went to the Art Students League in New York City. My school experiences there were very pleasant and successful. For some years after I painted portraits, mostly of children."[6] During this period (ca. 1915-1924), she also designed stained glass windows for Louis Tiffany, completed a painting at the Laura Spellman Hall in the New York YWCA, and painted a portrait of William Post, a New York financier. It is not known if any of these works is extant.

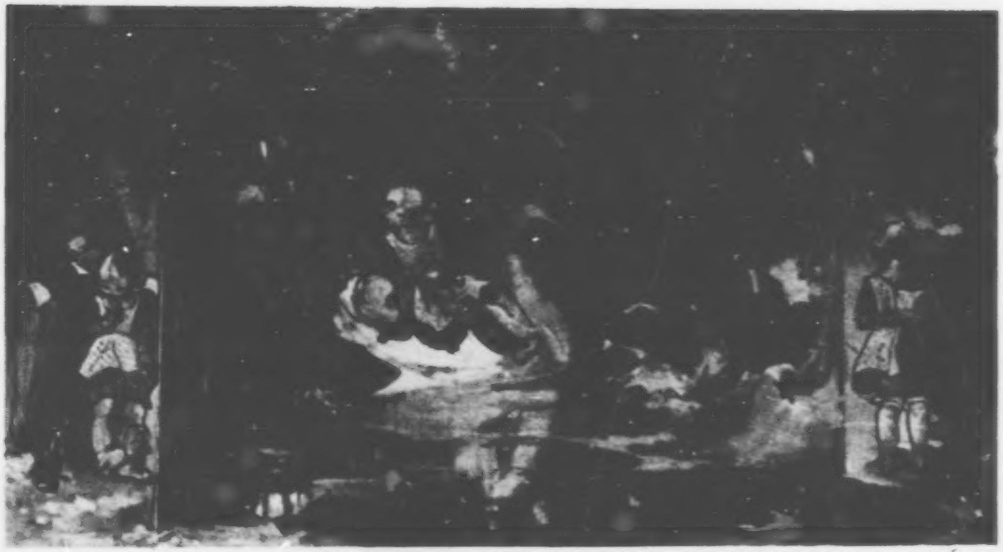
According to Dolan's writings, she ". . .went to the American School of Art at Fontainebleau, France, [in 1924] on a private scholarship."[7] Out of a very large class, only she and three other students received degrees in fresco painting. Indeed, Dolan was commissioned to paint two frescoes on the walls of the school. One is an enlarged version of Puvis de Chavannes' "Saint Genevieve Watching Over Paris"; the other depicts the Madonna and Child. In 1929, she also painted a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's "Head of Christ" in a thirteenth century cathedral in Fourqueux, France.

Earlier, when Dolan had returned to Lincoln in 1926, Morrill Hall, the State Museum of the University of Nebraska, was under construction. Dr. E.H. Barbour, then Director of the Museum and Chairman of the departments of geography and geology, was assembling a large collection of fossils, many of which were indigenous to Nebraska. This endeavor was sponsored by C.H. Morrill of Stromsburg, a former University Regent who also funded the building of the Morrill Hall Museum. Through Dr. Barbour, Dolan received the commission to paint the background murals for the fossil displays. In a letter of appointment, dated March 4, 1927, she was called a "decorator," and her salary was set at one hundred dollars per week.[8] Dolan wrote, "Dr. Barbour gave me my first big chance."[9]

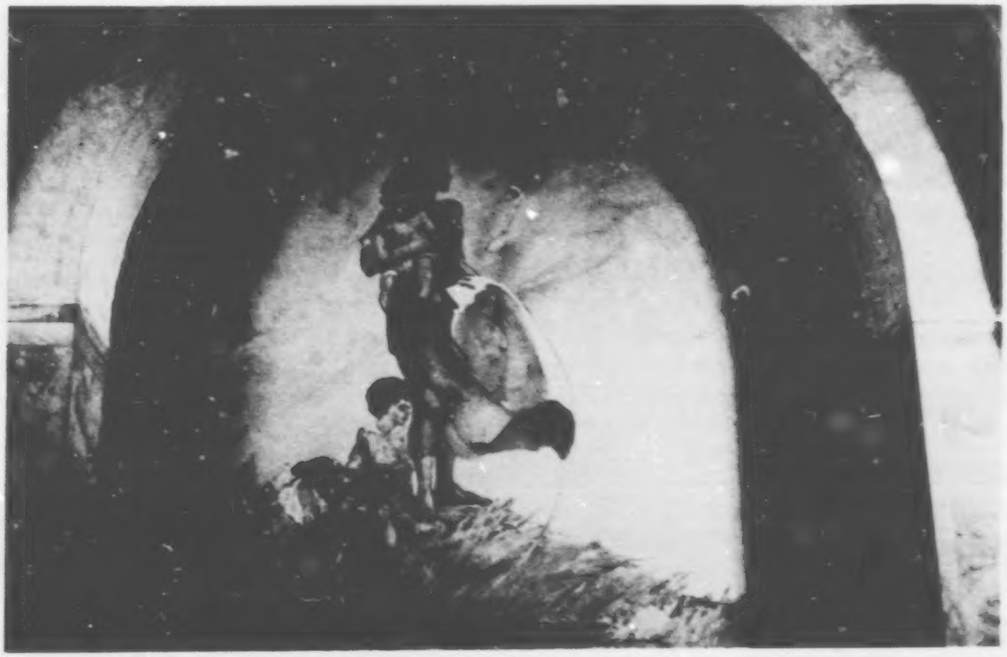
The murals in Morrill Hall are meant to depict the environments of the prehistoric animals in the displays. The settings themselves range from Africa's watering holes with their swamps and flourishing vegetation to Nebraska's sparse rolling plains. Although Dolan could not go abroad to view important excavation sites, she did travel throughout the state making preliminary sketches of the sites where the Nebraska fossils had been excavated. These tours included Sioux and Dawes Counties and Devil's Gulch in Brown County.

On the first floor of the museum, in Elephant Hall where the largest of the fossils are displayed, the murals on the east and west walls reach gigantic scale. Some are sixteen feet high and seventy feet wide. On the north wall, above the entrance to the Hall, is a mural suggesting the life of Cro-Magnon Man. Only the mural on the south wall is not by Dolan. In the remaining corridors on the first floor, her murals and the fossil exhibits are encased in glass and measure approximately nine feet high and seventy-five feet wide. There are also several of her habitat backgrounds on the lower level of the museum. She signed all of these murals.

Dolan's main working techniques on the murals are those of the illustrator. She outlined in order to suggest the forms of trees, animals, rocks, etc. Then she filled in the shapes with thin washes of color, probably oils with some powder pigments. There is great variation in the application of the paint. She went from quick, fine brushwork to large, long strokes and washes which are often allowed to drip down the walls. Because of the heroic scale of the murals, fine details are generally absent. Instead, Dolan uses color to suggest panoramic landscape and atmosphere. A small area of brushstrokes viewed closely, for example, might seem only a labyrinth of color patches; seen from a distance, however, the same area suggest foliage. Animals and trees alike are depicted more by areas of color than by detailed drawing—almost to the point of semi-abstraction. Similarly, mountains and cliffs are seen vaguely, as if through the atmosphere of great distances. The colors include pale blues and turquoises, golden yellows and oranges, lime greens, mauves, purples, and earthtones of grays and browns—generally a blond palette. About her work, Dolan explained, "I worked in pure color, and kept my murals free from darkness."[10]



HANSEL AND GRETEL
Presented to Cairie D. Reed, Children's Librarian in recognition of her inspiring work, Christmas, 1936. A Gift of the Community. Located at the Bennett Martin Public Library in Lincoln, Nebraska.



SPIRIT OF THE PRAIRIE
Located in the Nebraska Law Library, Nebraska State Capitol.

Dolan applied the paint directly to the wall surfaces, all of which were plaster. However, the texture of the plaster varies from exhibit to exhibit. Particularly in Elephant Hall, the plaster is applied in such a manner as to give an appearance of depth; the surface is rough and craggy-looking. Even though the color is applied thinly, the built-up plaster surface gives the illusion of thick paint. Thus, in the Elephant Hall murals, the rocks, for example, have an almost three-dimensional effect, as do the tree trunks; the texture of the plaster plays an integral part in the total effect of the mural. The other extreme of plaster application can be seen in the Pleistocene exhibit. Here the texture is barely noticeable; in fact, the surface is quite smooth, and the colors look almost transparent.

The vast scale of the Morrill Hall murals presented complex challenges to Dolan. Her solutions to these challenges of space and scale were ingenious. Aware that she was producing backgrounds, she recognized that detailed landscapes were inappropriate, and she chose the techniques of outlining, applying washes, and using ambiguous shapes and forms to cover large areas. Many of these techniques also offered the additional advantage of speed; she completed her task by June 30, 1928, some fifteen months after its inception.[11] More than fifty years later, the colors in these murals are still fresh, the surfaces are still rich with texture, and the hazy, almost impressionistic style is both subtle and powerful.

The Morrill Hall murals brought Dolan a wide and approving audience. In *The American Magazine of Art* (January, 1928), Mechlin wrote: "These paintings not only compare in quality with the best of the kind that have been done in our eastern museums but in some respects are superior. They are in high key, to an extent imaginative, and yet extremely accurate and effective. The rendering is broad and accomplished."[12] When Lincoln hosted the regional meeting of the American Federation of the Arts in 1928, many visitors had the opportunity to see the murals, including Professor W.D. Bancroft of Cornell University, who said, "It is worth the trip half way across the country to have seen Elizabeth Dolan's murals."[13] Holmes Smith also praised the Morrill Hall work in the August, 1929, issue of *The American Magazine of Art*, calling the murals "a harmonious blending of science and art."[14] One result of this exposure was that in 1932 Dolan received a commission to paint a background for the Age of Man Hall at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. This work is no longer extant.

Many of Dolan's contemporaries agreed on one of her most striking idiosyncracies; she vehemently objected to having anyone watch her paint. While at work on the Morrill Hall project, she told a reporter for the *Daily Nebraskan*, "The students are my greatest bother. . .. It is so distracting to try to paint when people are watching you and making remarks. I put up big signs but people tear down the canvas and even cut holes in it."[15] One Nebraska student remembers Dolan leaping down from her scaffold, rushing toward him, and angrily pointing at one of the signs which forbade people to watch her paint. Even Dr. Barbour knew of Dolan's distress about having an audience while she painted. In a letter to C.H. Morrill, Barbour wrote:

> *We have but one problem and that is the problem of visitors. We will never be able to settle that for the place [Morrill Hall] is becoming too well known. . .. Poor Miss Dolan who is so nearly done that she is trying conscientiously to finish has pinned on her back a big placard, to the effect that she would like to have her friends give her a chance to do her work.*[16]

In early 1930, Dolan was commissioned to paint a mural in the nearly-completed State Capitol. Upon accepting this commission, she submitted a letter to Governor Arthur J. Weaver on January 30, 1930, outlining her expenses: "2 rolls of mural canvas at $42.50 a roll (a very best English linnen [sic] at $55.00 a roll), making a cost of canvas $85.00 or $110.00. Oil paints approximately $25.00, living expenses for 2 months $200.00, total $310.00;" she then added, "I have made the estimate as low as possible because I wish to feel that I am really making a gift to my state."[17]

This large mural, "The Spirit of the Prairie," is painted above the archway of the north wall in the Law Library. Dolan portrays a mother, her two children, and their dog atop a grass-covered hill on a vast, open prairie. The horizon line is very low, emphasizing the spaciousness of the setting. Huge, white, fluffy clouds fill the sky; one is even reminded of the Nebraska breeze by the billowing garmets of the mother. The mother and the older child look away from the viewer, perhaps suggesting the future and the pioneer movement across the western prairie. One is again aware of the blonde palette of the artist and the illustrator's technique. The figures in the painting seem almost iconographic, implying the spirit of the Nebraska Pioneers—their courage, their pride, and their quest; indeed, the mural was originally to be called "The Pioneer Mother."[18] Again, as with the Morrill Hall murals, Dolan's very public work was well received. It was cited by Dr. Turner Bailey as "one of twelve best mother and child paintings in America."[19] A reproduction of the mural appeared in *The American Magazine of Art* in November, 1930, and the painting was reproduced as the cover of the Summer (1975) issue of *Nebraska History*.

The year 1930 was a busy one for Dolan. Besides her commission at the State Capitol, she painted ten large murals for the fiftieth anniversary of the Miller and Paine department store in Lincoln. The theme of the project was "Historical Nebraska," and the murals were displayed for a time in the first floor windows at Thirteenth and "O" Streets. Only one of these murals is extant: "Prairie Woman" is on the south wall of the Credit Department on the third floor of the present Miller and Paine downtown store. The same year Dolan also painted a large mural for the Unitarian Church, then located at Twelfth and "H" Streets. A church pamphlet of the time describes this painting as one which ". . .represents a striking young woman as she inspires a young boy in the search for truth. In the background, a number of figures are sketched, symbolizing the different stages of the progress of the search for religious truth; the Hebrew seer, the young Greek and Sir Galahad." The mural was called "The Search for Truth" and was placed behind the pulpit. When the Unitarian Church moved in 1960 to its present location on "A" Street, the mural was given to a member of Dolan's family.

In 1931, Dolan was commissioned to paint four large portraits in Morrill Hall. In his will, C.H. Morrill left $4,000 specifically for portraits to be painted of himself and his wife, of Dr. Samuel Avery (a former University Chancellor), and Dr. E.H. Barbour. In a letter to Dolan dated May 14, 1931, Chancellor E.A. Burnett clearly states that no other artist was asked to compete for this commission. He writes, "It is the general understanding that when the general form of the sketches and decoration is worked out the commission will be awarded to you."[20] The life-size portraits are hung in Founders Hall, a room to the West of Elephant Hall.

In each of these portraits, the background suggests the activities of its subject. About her work, Dolan stated, "I tried to plan the paintings with as much a suggestion of the founder as I could."[21] Thus, Mr. Morrill stands at the edge of the Blue River, the site of early homesteads; Mrs. Morrill is seated on the porch of her Stromsburg home. Dr. Avery is portrayed against a background of University buildings, and Dr. Barbour is placed in an outdoor setting typical of the sites where he and his staff excavated fossils. Mr. and Mrs. Morrill's portraits were painted from photographs, while the portraits of Dr. Avery and Dr. Barbour were rendered from life.

Many commissions in Lincoln followed the portraits in Founders Hall: ten large murals for the Masonic Temple, two murals for the YWCA, a mural at the University Club, a painting titled "Hansel and Gretel" at the Bennett Martin Library (in the Children's Reading Room), and a large triptych titled "World Peace" at the Nebraska Union (first floor women's lounge) on the University of Nebraska campus. She also received commissions for family portraits and landscapes, many of which still hang in private homes in Lincoln. During the decade of the thirties, Dolan painted small (18" x 20") works, usually landscapes and still lifes. They were displayed in the front window of the Sherwin Williams Paint Store (then located at Fifteenth and "O" Streets in Lincoln) and sold for five dollars each.

In 1937, Dolan was given a one-woman show at the Joslyn Memorial Art Gallery in Omaha. She also participated in shows at the Paris Salon, the Chicago Art Institute, and in New York City at the Knoedler and Anderson Galleries, the National Arts Club, the Art Students' League of New York, and the 1939 World's Fair.

Elizabeth Dolan's lengthy record of commissions attests to some measure of success in attaining her early ambition to be "a famous painter." Her single-minded devotion to that goal can be seen clearly in her refusal to be discouraged by the obstacles which she must have had to face when entering the Chicago Art Institute in 1912—when she was a forty-one year old woman embarking on what she determinedly called "a new world and a new life." When she was offered her "first big break" at the age of fifty-six, she conquered the forbidding blank walls of Morrill Hall and left an enduring record of her art. During the 1930s and 1940s, Dolan continued to paint and travel widely in both this country and abroad. She also continued to study and search for the finest materials for her work. But she always returned to Nebraska where she had had her greatest success. It is thus doubly ironic that in the years since her death in 1948, at the age of seventy-seven, Elizabeth Dolan has become an almost forgotten figure in Nebraska's rich history of talented artists. In her mural in the State Capitol, she had celebrated the pioneering spirit in Nebraska—particularly that of Nebraska women. In her own fierce independence and dedication "to invite beauty" into her life—and into the lives of those who shared her vision—she was herself a pioneering woman in the history of art in Nebraska.

NOTES

1. Dolan, Elizabeth, untitled typed manuscript, Bennett Martin Public Library, Lincoln, Nebraska. "Dolan MS" in all subsequent references.

2. Other sources and the dates which they list include: University of Nebraska registration card—May 20, 1875—University of Nebraska Archives, Love Library, Lincoln, Nebraska; *Who's Who In American Art*, Vol. I (1936-37)—May 20, 1887; *Who's Who In American Art* (1953)—May 20, 1890; *Who Was Who In America*, Vol. III (1951-60)—May 20, 1884.

3. Cannell, Margaret, letter to the author, June 23, 1982.

4. Dolan MS.

5. *Omaha World-Herald*, June 24, 1928.

6. Dolan MS.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Burnett, E.A., letter to Professor E.H. Barbour, March 28, 1927, Morrill Hall Archives, Nebraska Hall, Lincoln, Nebraska.

9. Dolan MS.

10. *Omaha World-Herald*, June 24, 1928.

11. At least one display with habitat background was completed after 1932 by the artist.

12. Mechlin, Lelia, "Regional Conference at Lincoln," *The American Magazine of Art*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (January, 1928).

13. *Omaha World-Herald*, June 24, 1928.

14. Smith, Holmes, "Elizabeth Dolan's Habitat Backgrounds for The University of Nebraska," *The American Magazine of Art*, Vol. XX (August, 1929).

15. Davis, Harriet, "Elizabeth Dolan Tells of Processes Involved in Painting Morrill Murals," *Daily Nebraskan*, April 18, 1928.

16. Barbour, E.H., letter to C.H. Morrill, June 26, 1928, Morrill Hall Archives.

17. Dolan, Elizabeth, letter to Governor Weaver, January 30, 1930, Law Library Files, Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Dolan MS.

20. Burnett, E.A., letter to Elizabeth Dolan, May 14, 1931, Morrill Hall Archives.

21. "Portraits Will Soon Be Open To Public," *Daily Nebraskan*, March 15, 1932.

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MARI SANDOZ
Photograph courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society

MARI SANDOZ
1896-1966

by Helen Winter Stauffer

Helen Winter Stauffer is a professor of English at Kearney State College. She received her B.A. in 1964 (Magna cum laude) from Kearney State College and her Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska in 1974. Her dissertation was on Mari Sandoz. Her areas of interest include women's literature and western American literature; she is a past president of Western Literature Association. Stauffer's biography of Mari Sandoz was published in 1982 by the University of Nebraska Press. She has published a number of articles on Sandoz and western writers and has co-edited with Susan Rosowski Women and Western American Literature *(Troy, New York: Whitston Press, 1982).*

In an article, Mari Sandoz once described her New York apartment as "an outpost in New York." She made it clear that she was still homesick for the Plains, from which she had moved long before. Her first attempt at making her apartment homelike had been to hang an old cowboy hat on the wall, "a reminder, in moments of anger and disgust with the east, that there was another country and another people."[1] On the same wall she also tacked up a combination bullet mold and reloading tool her father had used for gun repairs, and a 6′ x 9′ hand-made map she had been working on for years, recording the movements of the Plains Indians during the pre-reservation period.

Sandoz moved east—temporarily, she thought—in 1943, to be close to eastern publishers and to the great western historical repositories there, but there was never any question of her interest, loyalty, and love for the Great Plains. Her research and writing during her entire career was directed toward the trans-Missouri region, at the heart of which is Nebraska. More than any other writer she has concentrated on bringing this area—its history, geography, and people—to the attention of the reading public. Even coastal dwellers who tend to think of the midwest as "the hole in the doughnut" have heard of Old Jules; many admired the achievements of Miss Morissa, sorrowed over the fate of Crazy Horse, or mourned the deaths of the Cheyenne Indians killed at Fort Robinson.

In 1950, the University of Nebraska awarded Sandoz an honorary doctorate of letters, calling her a "distinguished Nebraska historian, biographer, novelist, and story writer, authority on Indians of the Nebraska Territory and neighboring states. . . widely-known teacher in creative writing at several state universities." A historical marker in Sheridan County, her birthplace, further points to her accomplishments: "This is the country of Mari Sandoz—historian, novelist, teacher—who brought its history and its people to life in her many books, articles and stories. . . .Mari Sandoz was internationally known as a chronicler of the West and an expert on Indian history. Her own aim was to understand all of life by understanding this one part of it: how man shaped the Plains country, and how it shaped him."

The events of Sandoz's early life determined her point of view throughout her career. Her political biases, her understanding of people, and her world-view were established in her youth and remained remarkably consistent during her lifetime. She based her works on events and influences of her life as the child of immigrant homesteaders on one of the last frontiers in America and on her years as a struggling writer in Lincoln.

She was born Marie (Mary) Susette Sandoz, May 11, 1896, the oldest child of Jules and his fourth wife, Mary Fehr Sandoz, Swiss immigrants and homesteaders in the Niobrara River region of northwestern Nebraska. The family lived beside an old Indian and trapper crossing on the Niobrara River, not far from the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian Reservations. The little girl saw, or heard her parents tell of, the disappearance of the Indians' way of life and the settiers coming in to establish their "new" civilization. Often trader, trapper, and Indian friends of her father, Old Jules Sandoz, would stop to trade yarns with him, and Mari grew up learning western history and folklore from these visitors. She came from an impoverished household, dominated by her fearsome father's unpredictable temper, and the family had a very low social standing in the community, but she later realized she was fortunate to have grown up in that place at that time.

On the Niobrara homestead several places were important to the little girl. East of the house was Indian Hill, once used for Indian signal fires, where she often played and hunted for Indian artifacts. She imagined the Indians still sending smoke signals from there. At the foot of the hill was the spot where Conquering Bear, an important Indian peace chief, had been buried in 1854. In Mari's lifetime Indians sometimes set up tepees at the bottom of the hill or across the road from the house, coming down from the nearby reservations to hunt, pick plums and berries in the fall, or help with the potato harvest in the neighborhood. She occasionally played with the Indian children and heard many stories from the adults concerning events on the Plains.

Indians spoke little English, but then neither did Mari, and they communicated through sign language. She heard from them the Indian version of the Indian wars and their attempts to adjust to reservation life. She learned of the events at Fort Robinson, forty miles west: the killing of the great Sioux Chief Crazy Horse in 1877 and the slaughter of the Cheyenne a year later as they tried to escape the fort and go to their homeland in Montana.

She spoke only Swiss-German when she first went to country school at the age of nine, but she learned English well enough in her first three month school session to read newspapers and was shortly writing her own little stories. Her first story was published on the children's page of an Omaha paper when she was almost twelve.

When Mari was fourteen, the family moved to a Kinkaid homestead, a ranch in the sandhills twenty-five miles south and east of the Niobrara place. Here the land was absolutely treeless, with no river flowing by, harsher and bleaker than her earlier home. Mari found here, nevertheless, a freedom and an acceptance in the community her family had not had before. But the old trappers, traders, prospectors, settlers and Indians no longer stopped by to tell their stories.

Mari finished the eighth grade in country school, the end of her formal education as far as the family was concerned. She began teaching country school and married a neighboring rancher, Wray Macumber, two weeks after her eighteenth birthday. For the next five years she helped her husband ranch and she taught in neighborhood schools. In 1919, Mari divorced her husband and went over 400 miles east to Lincoln. None of her papers ever alluded to her marriage. Eventually she gained admittance to the university despite her lack of high school credits, and during the next sixteen years she taught school, worked at odd jobs, went to the university whenever she could afford it, and wrote, wrote, wrote, but without financial success. Desperately poor, often malnourished and ill, she later claimed she had over 1,000 rejection slips from editors to whom she had sent her short stories.

As a writer, her goal for years was to master the short story. During those long years when she struggled for recognition, she concentrated on learning how to handle her material. But the material itself was never in question—her subject was always Nebraska, or the Nebraska region, usually the Niobrara region, although she claimed anything past the 100th meridian as her territory.

In the early 1920's, Sandoz became familiar with the Nebraska State Historical Society's vast collection of source material, including almost all of the regional newspapers from their inception. She also had access to the memoirs, files, and papers donated to the society by pioneers. Often, at the Society, she visited with the old-timers who dropped by to talk and reminisce, men such as Luther North. She was associated with the Society either through her own research or as an employee off and on during all her years in Lincoln.

In 1926 she also helped organize the Ricker Collection, obtained by Dr. A.E. Sheldon, the director, that was to be one of her most important sources for both *Crazy Horse* and *Cheyenne Autumn*. This immense collection, gathered by Judge Eli Ricker of Chadron in the late 1800's and early 1900's, included over two hundred pencil interviews written on Big Chief tablets, made with Indians and whites of this region who had lived through the troubles of the 1870's and into the 20th century. They gave valuable firsthand accounts of many incidents Sandoz later used in her books. She was working at the Society as assistant editor of *Nebraska History* and as the director of FERA personnel, over forty people, when the news came that *Old Jules*, her first book, had won the Atlantic Press nonfiction prize in 1935.

Sandoz's early years listening to the storytellers (and her later long association with the Society) gave her invaluable information and experience, and undoubtedly shaped her point of view—her sympathy for the Indians, for example, so unusual for that time and for one who lived close to all the problems of the reservations. She later pointed out events that contributed to her political views:

> *My own liberalism came. . .from a childhood of living in the midst of poverty. A continual caravan of the world's disinherited passed by our house in quest of free lands which my father helped them to find. Among them there was also the constant recognition of the exploitation of the Western states by the loan-bankers of the East. Thus, having at an early age become aware of the long struggle to obtain and defend a small and decent portion of individual liberty, and of the recent pressures against this liberty, as society became more and more complex, the development of my social consciousness was logically inevitable. Moreover, there was another determining factor in my childhood: the daily presence of an expropriated race, the American Indian.*[2]

Sandoz was fortunate while at the University in finding instructors who could help her develop methods necessary to her goals as a writer and historian. In Melvin Van den Bark's class in short story writing, she learned how to organize and focus her writing; from Fred Morrow Fling she learned a scientific approach to verification and examination of historical evidence. From him also she learned her elaborate system for filing her monumental research material. Later, a class from John Hicks was useful in her study of western and frontier history. Sometime during these years Sandoz formed the idea for her most ambitious work, a study of human beings on the Plains from the stone age to the present.

Sandoz's first book, *Old Jules*, was accepted for publication in 1935, after it had been sent out to thirteen publishers, rejected, and completely revised each time. Sandoz's persistence paid off; the book received national acclaim, established her reputation as a writer, and provided her, at last, with money and time to do research and to write.

The book combines the life of Jules

Sandoz, her father, and the history of the upper Niobrara region from 1884 to 1928. Unique in American literature, it is a combination of exhaustive research, personal recollection, and great writing skill.

Sandoz went to primary sources whenever possible for the book. She had her own recollections, but she begins the narrative years before her own birth. Even before her father's death in 1928, she had begun research of her region. She read any and all books pertinent to settling the frontier and spent months poring over copies of the old regional newspapers in the Nebraska State Historical Society collection. Three black two-ring student notebooks were filled with items from the local papers, together with her own comments. They also contain many personal interviews with old-timers, and a number of interviews with her mother. In addition, she used her father's voluminous files of old letters and pamphlets. He had kept everything, including drafts of his letters. These, over 4,000 pieces, were her best sources for first-hand information, because they did not suffer the problem of change of memory over intervening years. Even personal recollections of her own she checked with others involved.

Once Sandoz had assembled all possible information, she transcribed it on 3 x 5 cards, sorted them, put the book together like a long term paper, and began to hone it down into a literary form. It took years to accomplish this, and in the process many events were discarded either because they were apt to hurt people still alive or because they made the book too unwieldy.

Old Jules established the pattern for research she followed in all her later nonfiction: reliance on oral stories and interviews; use of privileged records; research into collections and published material. It also illustrates her strong sense of place. She never wrote nonfiction about a place she had not seen personally. In the case of *Old Jules* she was, of course, writing of an area she knew intimately, but she had an absolute need to be at the place she wrote of. For all her books she went to the geographical territory, often walking over the camping sites and battlegrounds. She required her own physical presence on a scene before she could write of it.

Another characteristic Sandoz exhibited in the writing of *Old Jules* which shows consistently throughout her life is her belief in her own accuracy. She went to great lengths to get her information, spending days or weeks tracking down some point that would seem minor to anyone else. But once she had assembled her material and was satisfied she had the facts, she was almost adamant that her version was correct. As she said once of *Old Jules*, every event in it could be authenticated, but the interpretation of the events was her own. This is not to suggest that Sandoz was rigid and authoritarian. She constantly sought information from people who had lived the history she wrote of. She was pleased to learn details and shared her own knowledge generously.

In American literature there is not another book quite like *Old Jules* for imparting the feel, the sense, of everyday life on a real frontier, together with the story of a remarkable man—whom Sandoz herself regarded as being closer to a frontiersman than a pioneer. As she wrote a friend, "He had the skill, the violence, and the courage to cope with the unknown elements of a wild country; but not the patience for the dull road of the pioneer. As soon as the region was fairly well tamed, his taste for conflict made him restless and he turned to the frontier of experimentation in fruit and soothed his turbulent spirit in fights with his neighbors. He was a frontiersman who opened the way for the pioneers who lived with him."[3]

Old Jules certainly fulfilled Sandoz's requirement that her subject be associated with her emotions, for Jules, the protagonist, was the most important man in her life. An egotistical, eccentric, sometimes brutal man with an explosive temper, he dominated his wife and children during his lifetime and for years afterward. Mari feared her father but she admired him also, for she knew that he was an important figure in the frontier community he helped to develop. Jules' life was inextricably involved with that of the Nebraska frontier. Realizing this, the author portrayed the strengths and weaknesses of the man and presented a biography of the community as well. The book is successful because she is able to depict a believable man in relation to both family and community. The realism and frankness are as gripping today as they were when the book first appeared.

Although the book is classed as nonfiction, Sandoz carefully crafted her prose, working for artistic as well as historical truth. Her combination of meticulous research and narrative mode confused some critics, but it succeeded so well in this book that it set the pattern for most of her nonfiction.

At the time *Old Jules* was published, Sandoz still thought of herself primarily as a writer rather than a historian, and her next two books were novels. *Slogum House* (1937) is set in the Niobrara region but on a mythical bend of the river and in two mythical counties nearby. Sandoz created her own territory here, much as William Faulkner created his Yoknapatawpha County. On the surface, the story is a struggle for land and power in the West. Gulla Slogum, the protagonist, is a ruthless, will-to-power woman who, to extend her power, uses her sons as outlaws and her daughters as prostitutes in her roadhouse. Although Gulla is one of Sandoz's most memorable creations, as ugly and unforgettable as her name suggests, Sandoz intended the book as an allegorical study of a will-to-power nation using force and guile to overcome weaker countries. She had been strongly affected by Hitler's *Mein Kampf;* she felt all too many Americans were attracted to his fascist ideas.

Hardly anyone recognized *Slogum House* as allegory (although it is Sandoz's best political novel); in Nebraska the reaction was often hostile. The mayor of Omaha banned it, although he had not read it, and so did several libraries outstate. People in her old neighborhood in the sandhills were angry; they were sure they regcognized some of the characters in the book. Her other two books on the theme of will-to-power, *Capital City* (1939) and *The Tom*

Walker (1947), were even less successful. The plots are flat and contrived, the characters generally unbelievable, the author's own thoughts often too visible. *Capital City* is an interesting experiment, however, in Sandoz's attempt to make the city itself, rather than individuals, the protagonist.

If Nebraskans were disturbed by *Slogum House*, Lincoln residents were even more irate over *Capital City*. Although Sandoz insisted she had created her city of Franklin in the state of Kanewa from composite characteristics of ten midwestern cities, Lincolnites were sure this was a *roman 'a clef;* they identified characters places, and events. Many claimed Sandoz was writing a smear of the city. The situation had become unpleasant when Sandoz moved rather abruptly to Denver in 1940. Ostensibly she wished to be near research repositories important to her next book, *Crazy Horse*, but friends reported a number of disagreeable incidents in Lincoln. The criticism of Nebraska and the midwest implied in these books, along with her liberal political views often at odds with those held by conservatives in Lincoln, held repercussions for a number of years. In 1959, when Nebraska educational TV contracted with Sandoz for two series, one on creative writing and one on history, a university regent suggested that the Board of Regents preview every script. He was quickly voted down.

Sandoz returned to writing history with her biography of *Crazy Horse* (1942). Here, too, she produced an unusual work, presenting history from the Indian point of view. One of the most successful aspects of this and her other Indian books is her detailed description of the Indian community. The closeness is achieved through the author's use of language. The story is told as if by an Indian, someone knowledgeable about their culture, their ideals, their religion and customs. Furthermore, the reader usually knows only what the Indians themselves know about the situation and can therefore share their emotions as they experience them. The reader's sympathy is with the Indians in the conflicts between Indians and whites.

Sandoz's use of language here is unusual. She uses only figures of speech compatible with the Indians' references and way of life. The Indian concept of the physical world is found throughout her books, in which the natural elements seem to be active: "As the first sun climbed into the sky, it dried up the little clouds that had slept in the west. . .. A steep hill lifted itself against the winds to come. . .. A scattering of box elders standing in their fallen leaves. . . The clouds now seeming to walk on the far hills."

Crazy Horse, the Oglala Sioux war chief who fought successfully against both General Crook and General Custer before his betrayal and death at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, in 1877, attracted Sandoz as a hero more than any other she wrote of. In envisioning Crazy Horse as a youngster and young man existing on the very land where their homestead later lay, she formed a close sympathy for him. Her intensive research only strengthened that sympathy. She always considered *Crazy Horse* her finest work. But in all her Indian books the author's veneration for the old, lost cultures is evident.

Old Jules, Crazy Horse, and *Cheyenne Autumn* are among Sandoz's finest works. The other three books of her Great Plains Series, *The Buffalo Hunters* (1954), *The Cattlemen* (1958), and *The Beaver Men* (1964), each develops the history of the West over several hundred years, using an animal species as the focal point. These too are based on enormous knowledge and research. Sandoz used an anecdotal style, such as she heard from the storytellers of her childhood, to gossip about the many characters who moved about on this vast landscape. These books are so crammed with people and events that one must read them slowly. They are well written and filled with details of time and place, but they lack the unifying factor of one or two major characters. They should, as one critic remarked, be digested slowly, with enjoyment.

Sandoz's fiction is not usually as well regarded as her nonfiction. When working with people who really lived, her imagination could recreate their world with remarkable believability. When working with fictional characters, she was not always able to make them vividly alive. Furthermore, as a historian she seemed unable to resist digressions that are historically interesting but clutter the story. As a born teacher, she often used her fiction for didactic purposes, sometimes too thinly disguised.

She did produce three fine novellas. *Winter Thunder* (1954), based on the 1949 blizzard in Nebraska, relates the adventures of a country school teacher and her pupils stranded in an isolated pasture for nine days. *The Horsecatcher* (1957) and *The Story Catcher* (1963) each traces the growth of a young Indian boy as he attempts to integrate his personal life with that of his tribe. Both contain intimate details of Indian village life in the 1800's on the Plains. All are excellent introductions to the Plains: *Winter Thunder* was originally written for an adult audience, the other two for young adults, but all three can be enjoyed by both audiences.

Sandoz's longer novels, although most must be considered flawed, are interesting as they reflect the ideas of the author. In addition to the three allegorical works, she wrote *Miss Morissa* (1955), the story of a frontier woman doctor. The book is based on lives of three actual women doctors; consequently it is so crammed with incident that plot and character disappear. On the other hand, *Son of the Gamblin' Man* (1960), based on the youth of the painter Robert Henri, excludes so much detail that the story is confused and murky. Henri's real name was Robert Cozad; he was the son of the founder and namesake of Cozad, Nebraska, but Sandoz could verify so little of Henri's early life that the story leaves out too much detail. In her writing, Sandoz was not afraid to try and fail, but she was a steady, serious craftsman. Her control of her art is evident, particularly in her nonfiction.

As a historian, Sandoz was not infallible. She was sometimes prejudiced, certainly biased and occasionally she seems narrow in her view. Some of her historical research has been challenged since her death in 1966, but none of it has yet been convincingly disproved. Many historians disapprove more of her story-telling or mythic approach to her material than they do to her research methods or the accuracy of her information. Historians prefer the problem-solving method. They fear that the writer using the narrative approach may subordinate historical facts to the desire for a dramatic or artistic work. Sandoz had little concern for theory in any field. She was a doer, not a philosopher.

Mari Sandoz has contributed greatly to western, frontier, and Indian history. She had extraordinary knowledge of details of frontier life, both from her own experience and from her reading and research. Her notes on Cheyenne and Sioux geneologies are probably the most complete anywhere for certain Indian families, especially Cheyenne, since the Cheyenne records from which she got much of her information were later destroyed in a fire. She knew more of Plains Indian history than most modern Indians do. She was interested at a time when some of the survivors of the Indian wars, Wounded Knee, and early reservation life were still alive and would talk to her. It was her interest in research in the great western collections that finally sent her East to live—for much of this material is in the great universities and museums on the east coast.

The author's theme in all her books is the relationship of humans to the land. They shaped the land, but the land also shaped the people, and she wanted to explore both facets. She quarreled with the histories and the biographies that perpetuated old, incorrect information (Buffalo Bill Cody and Wild Bill Hickok were her particular targets). She combined her sympathy for her heroes with solid historical research, much of it in primary material, some never used by other historians. She did not allow the sympathy she felt for either the heroes or the cultures of the past to stop her from engaging in her research for truth.

Consistently throughout her career, she maintained her concern for minorities overwhelmed by a majority greedy for their possessions. She was concerned about inhumanity suffered by anyone, she felt nostalgia for lost civilizations of the past, she admired individuals who met their fate with dignity, and she was always aware of the beauty of nature. She believed in the absolute necessity of development through stuggle, and that the white civilization of America had inflicted an irreparable loss on itself by its treatment of the Indians.

Something of a mystic, she shared with most western American writers the classical view of myth and tragedy, emphasizing the importance of intuition rather than logic. Agreeing with Karl Jung's collective unconscious, she was attracted to the use of image, myth, and symbol. The concrete images of her childhood included the guns of her father and the cattlemen he opposed; the smoky kitchen of her home; Indian Hill, the place on the farmstead from which Indians used to send signal fires; the Niobrara River; and the sandhills. Later she included the image of the magnificent Nebraska State Capitol and the statue on the capitol tower of the man sowing grain.

Sandoz was always concerned for her reputation as a writer—this was her early goal and she worked hard all her life to achieve the quality of writing she thought worthy of her. But eventually she began to realize that her goals for her writing had changed somewhat. She was no longer content just to be a writer—she wanted to write about matters of consequence, of significance. And she found her subjects to be rooted in the history of her region. In the preface to *The Beaver Men*, the last book of her Great Plains Series, she sums it up rather well:

> *Gradually I discovered that what the white man did to the Great Plains, good and bad, was largely a repetition of what man of any color did elsewhere, Europe, say, or Asia, from Stone Age to the present. In the older regions, the process had been very gradual, so protracted that much of the record was lost. On the Plains the transition was swift, the tangible records preserved in local repositories or farther away, and amazingly complete, much of what happened still visible on the earth itself, much of the story still within the memory of the great-grandfathers, ready for investigation, ready for anyone who would listen.*

And so, although her apartment was in New York, Sandoz returned to the Great Plains again and again. She was in Nebraska several times each year to promote her books, to lecture, or to do research. Her last trip from New York was to Nebraska in 1964. That October she came to spend a day on the campus of Kearney State College, lecturing, consulting, and discussing writing. Before returning east, she stopped off at Hastings. Her friends Dorothy Creigh and Margaret Binderup (a book store owner) noted how tired and ill she looked. Upon her return to New York she learned her cancer had reappeared. She died in New York, March 10, 1966. According to her wish, she was buried half-way up on the north hill of the Sandoz fruit ranch in the sandhills. The grave overlooks the orchards, across the hay flats to the barns and house. Just a short distance from the highway, the grave is often visited by friends and admirers of the writer, whose heart was always in the west.

NOTES

*Most of the material for this paper comes from the Sandoz Collection, Archives, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Library; from letters and interviews with friends and relatives; and examination of Sandoz manuscripts.

1. "Outpost in New York," *Prairie Schooner 37* (Summer 1963): pp. 95-106, collected in *Sandhill Sundays and Other Recollections*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970, p. 139.
2. "The Son," *Sandhills Sundays*, pp. 59-60.
3. Mari Sandoz to Mamie Meredith, n.d., 1936.

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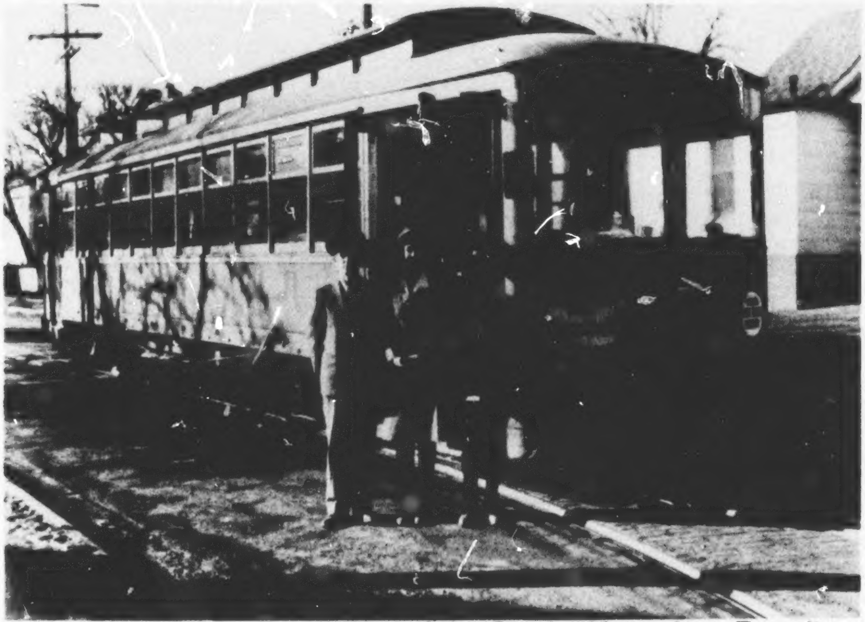
UNION MAIDS



World War II scene, courtesy of the Omaha Metro Area Transit

Photograph courtesy of Victoria Simmons, the woman pictured in this 1910 era scene at the Ord Journal.

"UNION MAIDS"
In Omaha Labor History
1887-1945

by William C. Pratt

Dr. William C. Pratt is a Professor of History at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and research historian for the Nebraska Labor History Project. Recent publications include a pamphlet on local labor history, "Omaha in the Making of Nebraska Labor History" (1981) and "Women Socialists and their Male comrades: The Reading Experience, 1927-1936," in Sally M. Miller (ed.), Flawed Liberation: Socialism and Feminism *(1981). Pratt received his Ph.D. from Emory University in 1969.*

You gals who want to be free
Just take a tip from me
Get you a man with a union [card]
And join a ladies' auxiliary.

So reads the chorus of a well known labor song. Although labor music is often identified in many people's minds as a left-wing or progressive phenomenon, these particular words reflect a deeply-rooted, conservative notion about women in the labor movement. What they suggest, of course, is that the proper place for women is in a supportive role as a wife in a ladies' auxiliary. On the other hand, a popular documentary film, "Union Maids," offers a much different portrayal of women in unions. Here, we have the story of three women union organizers and their struggles in the 1930s. This film, along with other recent productions such as "With Babies and Banners," has shown an often unaware public that some women have played a very active role in trade union history and encourages interest about "Union Maids" in other settings.[1] This essay surveys women in the Omaha labor movement from the late nineteenth century into the immediate post-World War II era. It draws primarily from contemporary newspaper accounts and suggests that Omaha's "Union Maids" have had a richer history than earlier imagined.

Trade unions in Nebraska date back at least to the immediate post-Civil War era, but there seemingly is little reference to women unionists until a later date.[2] The Knights of Labor had established a presence in the 1880s and 1890s, and it is reported that there were as many as twenty-eight Knights' assemblies in Omaha and two more in South Omaha, which remained a separate town until 1915. Women participated in this movement locally, as they did across the country and local sources contain references to such activity from time to time.[3]

According to a 1913 issue of the *Western Laborer*, Omaha's "first labor celebration" occurred on Independence Day, 1887. A detailed account was provided by the Omaha *Bee*, one of the city's major daily newspapers. After listing several labor leaders by name, the story added: ". . . and a number of ladies of the Omaha female K. of L. assembly were among those on the platform."[4] Despite such occasional references, however, this survey has not uncovered very much discussion on the topic of women in the labor movement of this era. In July of 1889, six women bookbinders went on strike after they had been notified. . . that in the future they would be paid by the piece instead of by the week." Apparently they were not union members, but were honored by the local labor movement in that year's Labor Day parade.[5] Omaha had two separate Knights of Labor assemblies for women in this era. An 1893 issue of the *Western Laborer*, a local weekly labor paper, lists regularly scheduled weekly meetings for these organizations:

> *LOCAL 718 - Working Women's Assembly.*
> *Meets Friday evenings in Knights of Labor small hall. Mrs. M.E. Hart, M.W.; Mrs. Marion Manning, secretary, 1615 Dodge Street.*
>
> . . . .
>
> *LOCAL 3633-Working Girls. Friday evening in Knights of Labor Hall. Mamie Lane, M.W.; Miss Katie Callahan, secretary, 618 North Fourteenth Street.*[6]

While the activites of Omaha's women Knights remain obscure at this point, there are hints that they played an auxiliary role at least on occasion. For example, the national Bricklayers and Masons' convention was held in Omaha in early 1894. The local AFL union sought the help of the women Knights at "a grand testimonial ball" which concluded the gathering. According to the Omaha *World-Herald*: "The ladies were out in response to the invitation in full force, and did everything towards making the occasion a pleasant and attractive one."[7] Available issues of the *Western Laborer* devoted litle attention to the female Knights, but a short item in mid-1895 reported the breakup of Local 3633. It stated:

> *The Working Girls' assembly K. of L. has ceased to exist. The girls made a splendid fight for life, but could not induce the thousands of working girls to take an interest in the assembly or even become members. If they*

> *join a labor organization they are afraid that people might think they work for a living.*[8]

Relatively few local women belonged to unions in this era. The ovewhelming majority of unions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were craft unions, and, consequently, "men only" affairs. What little labor news that related to women was more likely to treat the ladies' auxiliaries of these craft unions or perhaps of the Central Labor Union rather than women unionists themselves.

Occasionally, however, there were labor stories involving women workers. In March of 1899, for example, women seamstresses went out on strike against the Omaha Tent and Awning Company. They were not organized into a union, and struck over both wages and working conditions. A letter to the Omaha *World-Herald* referred to the work stoppage as "the sewing girls' strike."[9] On another occasion, the Omaha *Labor Bulletin* suggested that local department stores paid their women employees such low wages that many were forced to turn to prostitution. The *Western Laborer*, however, jumped into the fray, defending the women's honor.[10]

Even in this era, it should be emphasized, there were some women unionists. The Omaha Typographical Union had women members at least as early as the 1890s. Its international maintained that women printers should receive the same pay as their male colleagues, and a 1916 article reported that since 1890 "there has always been one or more women in . . . [the Omaha *World-Herald's*] composing room earning the same pay as the men . . ."[11] One of the first to work for the *World Herald* was Mary Kerigan Lukegord. Her 1940 obituary notes:

> *Mrs. Lukegord . . . was born in Ireland but moved to the United States at the age of 12 . . . . She worked on* The World-Herald *between 1891 [1890] and 1894, before her marriage, when she was Mary Kerrigan. When linotypes were introduced, she refused to learn their operation, said typesetting had become a man's work, but up to the time of her death she still held a card in the Omaha Typographical Union No. 190.*[12]

After she quit the trade, Mrs. Lukegord joined her union's auxiliary which was one of the most active in the local labor movement. It should be noted that other women printers did not share her view that printing became "a man's work" due to the linotype, and Omaha newspapers employed many women printers in the twentieth century. One of Local 190's oldest surviving members is Victoria Simmons, who was employed by both the Omaha *Bee-News* and the *World-Herald*, and is now in her nineties.

A major employer of women has been Omaha's packing industry. The packing houses were concentrated in South Omaha and had become an important part of the local economy in the 1880's. Much of Omaha's labor history revolves around these plants and the repeated efforts to organize them. Women often participated in these struggles, but David Brody reports one early twentieth century episode in which male workers walked out of the South Omaha Cudahy plant in protest over the hiring of additional women workers.[13]

Ironically, a woman had played a key role a few years earlier in a successful strike against several packing houses. In July of 1898, a spontaneous walkout of Cudahy laborers grew into a large scale work stoppage of more than 5,000 workers. Their efforts shut down the major local packers and resulted in modest wage increases. "Mother" Mary Jones, a noted woman labor orator best known for her activities in the coal fields, was in Omaha during the strike and enlisted in its cause. She had come to the city to promote a subscription drive for a socialist newspaper, but upon being informed of "the merits of the strike," reportedly said: "Civilization owes those men, their wives and babies better treatment than that. I will go down and do what I can." This same account indicates that she addressed strikers on five different occasions and provided advice to their leaders, concluding: "Mother Jones has endeared herself in the hearts of the packing house men and it will be many a long day before they will forget her."[14]

The late 1890s and early years of the twentieth century were a period of growth for the local labor movement. Unions were reestablished in the packing houses and organized in other areas as well. The Omaha *World-Herald* counted 60 unions by 1901 and several others were organized in the next few years.[15] Women members were signed up by the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen and the Retail Clerks, among other trade unions. Retail Clerks Local No. 230 was chartered in late 1902. Newspaper accounts note that dues were lower for women and that two of the new officers were women.[16] The promising future of the revitalized labor movement was aborted, however, as local unions suffered serious setbacks in the 1903-04 era.

In 1904, a nation-wide packing strike ended in total defeat. Locally, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen lost their standing among packing house workers who then remained unorganized for more than a decade.[17] A small number of women had walked out with close to 5,000 men when the strike began. Though their numbers were not great, there were some noteworthy episodes involving women strikers. Sarah Hurley, the daughter and sister of strikers, led women from Swift's sausage department in a walkout even though the company had doubled their daily rate to keep them on the job during the strike.[18] At one point, a temporary settlement was reached and many workers returned to the plants. Then, it fell through and the strike was resumed. A *Daily News* story indicated the renewed support that some women workers gave the work stoppage:

> *The loyalty of the women, although only a few of them are members of unions, was again apparent Friday noon, as the men were recalled, after working only a few hours.*
>
> *Dozens of girls walked out of the sausage departments of the various packing plants to assist their fellow workmen. They expressed no regrets for themselves, but said that they were sorry that the men had to be called out again.*[19]

As time passed, however, the strikers' ranks did not hold, and some men and women returned to work before the strike officially ended. The two-month old strike was lost. By 1904, the local labor movement was in retreat.

Although U.S. trade unions generally were "men only" affairs in the early twentieth century, some attention was devoted to women. The Omaha labor movement brought in women speakers from time to time and supported woman suffrage in the pre-World War I era. In 1909, 1913, and 1914, the Omaha Central Labor Union scheduled women speakers at the Labor Day picnic. Its 1909 woman speaker was Mary E. McDowell, a Chicago social worker, who had been very involved with her city's packing house district.[20] In 1913, the central labor body invited Mary O'Reilly, a Chicago teachers' union figure and a leader of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). Her speech, according to the *World-Herald*, was a "stirring and pointed talk on unionism for the women workers." This paper also printed the following excerpt from her remarks:

> *The time has come, it has been here a long, long time, when the women workers must assume a place in the successful advancement and upholding of organized labor. The demand for independence and self-thinking in the woman--the women worker--today requires organization. Organization is the essential factor in the well being of any move for the upbuilding and advancement of unsuccessful conditions, whether they be for capital or labor, for the reformation of social and economic conditions or for religion or the many other movements I might mention.*
>
> *Organization for women workers must come, first for their own welfare and secondly for the general cause of organized labor.*[21]

In 1914, Nebraska had a petition campaign to place a woman suffrage amendment on the ballot. The previous year, the Nebraska Federation of Labor had endorsed the idea and in early March of 1914 the Omaha Central Labor Union announced its support. According to the *World-Herald*, the measure "was passed with only two opposing votes."[22]

It was announced that the central body would form a "labor league for suffrage," which "will meet at night so that all members of the various labor unions may be able to attend." This same account also reported: "There is also a movement on foot to form one or more suffrage organizations among the working women of Omaha."[23] An outside woman speaker, Magdalen B. Munson, visited Omaha to promote the suffrage cause. She had spoken to the Central Labor Union prior to its endorsement and addressed numerous other gatherings, including "1,000 men at the Armour Packing Company in South Omaha. . ."[24] Subsequently, the central labor body invited Agnes Nestor as a Labor Day speaker. At the time, she was president of both Chicago's WTUL and the Glove Workers Union. The focus of her comments, according to the *World-Herald*, "was chiefly on the subject of woman suffrage and its influence upon the solution of the great difficulties which beset the working woman."[25] Though the suffrage amendment was narrowly defeated on the November ballot, much of the labor movement had been in its corner.[26]

The involvement of women in the trade union movement increased during World War I. Locally, it was in the packing industry that it was most noteworthy. In early September of 1917, more than 5,000 workers walked out of South Omaha's major packing houses. Contemporary newspaper accounts reported that this time women had often led the way. The general manager of the Cudahy plant was quoted as saying:

> *The girls are the leaders in our strike. They are the hardest of our employees to contend with at this critical moment.*[27]

South Omaha packing house workers had been unorganized since the 1904 strike, but on September 7, women strikers met to organize themselves into a union. According to the *World-Herald:* "It was presided over by Mrs. Frank Hoye, who, with her husband and some of her five daughters, is employed at the Morris plant. The women come from all the plants and are of all nationalities."[28] The following day, women strikers set up picket lines "and induced many women who had started to work to return to their homes. At one plant," so this contemporary report reads, "the pickets tore the clothes of a girl who insisted on going to work."[29] After one week, a federal mediator arranged a settlement, and the workers returned to their jobs. Though the strikers did not win on every point, they felt that they had gained a real victory. They received "a raise of two and one-half cents an hour," and the recognition of the principle of employee representation. In addition, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen was re-organized and claimed that more than 5,000 members had signed up within a few days.[30] It was perhaps the most important victory within the local packing industry in recent memory. The workers had made some real gains and women had played a crucial role.

Wartime employment opportunities for women opened up in other industries as well. Within a week of the settlement of the packing house strike, the *World-Herald* reported that the Union Pacific was hiring a large number of female employees: "Women are rapidly replacing men in many branches of service on the Union Pacific and hundreds of the gentler sex are already drawing railroad pay that once went into the pocketbooks of their fathers, husbands or brothers."[31] Many others obtained posts temporarily which earlier had been reserved for men. On the eve of the 1918 Armistice, the local U.S. employment bureau was encouraging employers to replace "non-essential employees" with women so as to release more men for war work. It was suggested, for example, that women might soon be hired to operate local taxi cabs.[32] However, this situation quickly changed with the end of the war. Then, women were encouraged to quit their new positions. "WOMEN SLOW TO GIVE BACK JOBS TO THE SOLDIERS" reads one headline in late 1918. Union men and others feared that women workers would be willing to work for lower wages than returning service men, and sought to prevent that circumstance from occurring. Said one woman, identified as "prominent as a labor leader in the state":

> *I am afraid that there are many instances where a girl, earning $30 a week war wages, will be willing to take $20 a week when the returning soldier should get back his place for at least $25. Many housemaids have been "promoted" by entering other lines opened up by the exodus of soldiers to the army, and they should be willing to go back to their old places and employment*
>
> *Society girls and girls who really do not need the money, but took jobs to be patriotic, should now give them up, if they are patriotic. As nearly as possible, employment should resume its prewar condition.*[33]

Regardless of this question, the postwar period witnessed numerous setbacks for organized labor. Unions frequently found themselves on the defensive, as their opponents sought to reduce their influence. In Nebraska, the "Open Shop" drive was managed by the Omaha Business Men's Association. The years 1919-1922 were marked by several serious defeats and helped set the tone for the next decade. Omaha witnessed a great deal of turmoil in the summer and early fall of 1919. Michael L. Lawson has surveyed the labor and racial strife of those months, which ended with the late September lynching of a black man accused of rape and the near-lynching of the city's mayor.[34] While overshadowed by these more notorious events, the local labor movement had made an impressive showing on Labor Day, some observers claiming that its parade was the largest in Omaha's history. Perhaps as many as 20,000 marched and there was little hint that many local unions would soon be in retreat.[35] But wartime gains often were placed in jeopardy, as the public mood shifted and became less sympathetic to organized labor. The year 1919 marked the beginning of more than a decade of retreat for unions across the country.[36]

One of the local labor movement's most disastrous blows in this era came with the 1921-22 packing house strike. This episode was precipitated by the packers' announcement of a wage cut across the industry. Omaha packing house workers, as did their counterparts in other packing centers, went out on strike in early December of 1921. This labor dispute proved to be one of the most bitter in the city's history. Large numbers of strike-breakers were brought in and, on one occasion, the Omaha police "fixed bayonets" to disperse a crowd of an estimated 2,000 strikers.[37] A large number of men and women were arrested in the course of the strike, and the packing house union was again broken up.

Women were often on the picketing line. Newspaper accounts provided a rich detail of strike activity, including the following:

> *Two women strikers were sentenced today to fifteen days in jail. . . .*
>
> *One was Mrs. Mary Symiski. . . . charged with throwing pepper in to the eyes of Policeman Bert Thorpe Tuesday afternoon, when he attempted to arrest a*

striker.

> *The other was Mrs. Anna Balkus. . . . mother of three, accussed of disturbing the peace by throwing bricks. When arrested in front of the Armour plant, she is alleged to have had several bricks in her muff.*[38]

Perhaps the biggest news story involving women during the 1921-22 packing strike concerned approximately 300 women who marched on city hall on December 20, 1921. Complaining about police behavior and alleged diseased conditions in the operating packing houses this group was dubbed the "Amazon Army" by the *Daily News. It was "led by Mrs. Anna Papick" and reportedly consisted of women relatives of strikers.*[39] *Omaha's weekly labor paper, the Mid-West Labor News,* also reported this episode, headlining its account: "WOMEN PLAY IMPORTANT PART IN BUTCHER WORKMEN STRIKE."[40] Another story told of a Kansas City woman striker who dragged her strikebreaking nephew out of the South Omaha Swift plant by his ear.[41]

The strike, however, ended in total defeat. It took more than fifteen years before the Omaha packing houses were truly unionized again, as some of their work force was disaffected with the labor movement as a result of the 1921-22 setback. In addition, the bad publicity about strikers' activity on the picket line may have contributed to the passage of an anti-picketing measure which was on the ballot in November of 1922. The *Mid-West Labor News* observed: "It is surprising to note that the law carried in Omaha, the main industrial center of the state and home of most of the organized workers."[42] Though not all unions suffered to the extent of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, the 1920s and the early 1930s were unpromising to the cause of organized labor. The bitter events of 1919-1922, in some respects may have foreshadowed hard times for much of the local labor movement. It is not surprising, the, that a 1930s *Harper's Magazine* article cited an Omaha Businessmen's Association claim which stated: "Omaha is the best open shop city of its size in the United States. . . ."[43]

Women in the labor movement in this era shared in the setbacks that undercut many unions. They continued their membership in unions and auxiliaries, and waited for a better day. Unfortunately, their wait was often longer than that of male unionists. Locally, although women were organized in the union drives of the New Deal era, in many cases such gains did not occur until the late 1930s. Organized labor had been generally supportive of woman suffrage, but in the depression era often opposed married women working and was a strong opponent to the Equal Rights Amendment.

In late December of 1933, the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks re-established itself at the Union Pacific and ousted the existing company union in a close election. This union represented more than 2,000 employees, many of whom were women, and elected a woman as recording secretary and one of its trustees.[44] Both the company union and the Brotherhood had a "rule forbidding married women's employment as clerks. . . ." Mrs. Agnes T.E. Brisbin, a UP employee since 1923, had secretly married in the fall of 1933, but it did not become publicly known until 1936. Following that disclosure, the union sought her discharge under the terms of the contract with the UP. Mrs. Brisbin then sought an injunction against the Brotherhood in what was referred to in the local press "the 'keep-a-job' suit." While the judge issued a temporary restraining order, he ultimately upheld the union rule. In the course of the litigation, a UP official "revealed half a dozen women had either resigned or had been discharged when their marriages were revealed."[45]

Four years earlier, *The Unionist* printed several letters from "the Unemployed Single Teachers Organization" which sought "the removal of all married teachers from the Omaha schools who are not the sole bread-winners of their family."[46] Though this weekly labor paper published these letters, it did not endorse the idea editorially. In its first issue of 1932, *The Unionist* had published an article headed: "Women Unionists Resent Drive on Married Women." It dealt with a statement from the National Women's Trade Union League denouncing the proposal to terminate married women as a means of helping the unemployment situation.[47]

But if there was some ambiguity about this labor paper's position on married women working, there was no doubt concerning its total opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment. The ERA had been promoted for years by the small National Woman's Party to the dismay of organized labor. Since the AFL-CIO emerged as a backer of this measure in the 1970s, it may seem strange that earlier the trade union movement was ranked among its strongest opponents. Organized labor was particularly concerned that the ERA threatened protective legislation for women which unions had championed in the early twentieth century. Said a 1932 *Unionist* article:

> *The outstanding feature of the amendment is the repeal of all laws that protect women in industry. Over a long period of years organized labor has participated in securing the enactment of a large number of state laws protecting women workers against the greed of profit-mad employers, ever ready to impose working conditions that are unjust to their women employees and an insult to the social conscience.*[48]

On two separate occasions in the late 1930s this paper reprinted anti-ERA editorials one of which was entitled; "That Fake 'Equal Rights' Amendment."[49] Yet, perhaps it should also be noted that *The Unionist* cited the AFL's support of "equal pay for women workers," and gave the example of the Typographical Union in a 1930 editorial:

> *A visit to the composing rooms of either of the Omaha daily papers will disclose a number of educated, skilled women reading proof and operating machines, each one participating with the male members of the chapels and the union in the conduct of its affairs, and each of them on an absolute par with the men.*[50]

Overall, however, *The Unionist* did not publish a great deal of information about local women unionists. Union auxiliaries were much more likely to be covered, though this AFL paper did report that Mrs. Louis P. Hansen became president of the district's Cigarmakers Union in mid-1934. She was the wife of a small local cigar manufacturer.[51] But by this time, the Cigarmakers had declined across the country and locally had not been a strong force since the turn of the century. Most of the local union gains for women in this era seemingly came with organization of CIO unions and that topic was normally not covered in the pages of *The Unionist*.

CIO organization efforts in Omaha really began in the packing industry. The old AFL union had disintegrated in the wake of the 1921-22 strike, but an effort was made to revive it in 1933. Then, after that attempt fizzled in the packing houses, an independent union was started in 1937 which eventually evolved into the CIO's Packinghouse Workers Organization Committee (PWOC).[52] Vida Morrison, the wife of one of the union's first presidents and herself a trustee of the local at that time, recently commented upon some of the working conditions for women: "[M]any of the bosses were intimidating women for sex and [to] bring them whiskey and cakes and stuff like that. That was really bad. I had it tried on me. In fact, I got laid off for not understanding doubletalk." She also related the difficulties married women had in finding time to be involved in union activity. After completing their shift at the plant, then they were expected to prepare meals and tend to their children. Said Morrison: "My husband would come home, sit down and put his feet up there and sleep a couple of hours and I had to get supper and do the dishes and check on my kids and all this other stuff." She also noted that at the time she was active, she had quit her job at the Armour's plant.[53] Despite such obstacles, however, some women were involved in the organization efforts.

It was not until the war years that all of Omaha's major packing plants were under union contract. Those years were also marked by a great influx of new women workers into this industry and others. Omaha packing house locals often elected women as their recording secretaries and other posts, including delegates to union conferences. In early 1943, Local 8 (the Armour's local) had women serving as recording secretary, two of the trustees and the inside guard.[54]

Two issues directly related to women packing house workers received attention in this era.[55] Historically, the packing industry had divided its work into "men's jobs" and "women's jobs," with the latter positions paying a lower rate. Although this issue was not entirely resolved at this time, the union sought to deal with it and numerous grievances were filed against packers when they refused to pay women the "men's rate" after they had been assigned traditional "men's jobs."[56] A 1943 *World-Herald* article on forthcoming negotiations began: "Equal pay for women workers is one of the demands of the 15 thousand Omaha organized packing house workers. . . ."[57] A second issue concerned the employment of black women in the local plants. Despite the issuance of Executive Order No. 8802 (which was intended to eliminate racial discrimination in hiring in defense plants), few if any black women had been hired by some local packers. A small number of black women approached Local 8 on this matter. The union then took up the issue with the company and sought intervention of the federal government pursuant to Executive Order No 8802. These steps resulted in a change in Armour's hiring practices, and other uncooperative packers also began hiring black women. Rowena Moore, one of the initiators of the effort, subsequently was elected secretary of Local 8 after she went to work at the Armour plant.[58]

The packing industry was only one of many that recruited large numbers of women workers during World War II. Want ads, front page news stories and the U.S. Employment Service encouraged women to assume jobs in defense plants. In late October of 1944, a *World-Herald* article reported that more than 18,000 women "now are at work in the war plants of this area," and pleaded: "Our War Plants Need You."[59] One of the largest local employers of female labor at the time was the Martin Bomber Plant, which built B-26 bombers.[60] By late 1943, the plant employed more than 14,000 workers, 40 percent of whom were women.[61] Many of them received their training from the Martin Company or in "special defense training classes" at Omaha's Technical High School.[62] Other defense jobs for women were with the Omaha Steel Works and local awning companies which made "silk parachutes for fragementation bombs. . ."[63] But in addition to assuming position in defense industries, women also worked in other capacities, replacing men who either had gone into the armed services or other employment. Some took jobs in local breweries and on the railroads, operated trolleys and taxi cabs, tended bar and worked as construction laborers.[64]

The rapid growth of wartime employment created new opportunities for organized labor.[65] As already suggested, the PWOC consolidated its position within the local packing houses during the early 1940s, and became the United Packinghouse Workers of America in 1943. Other local unions also increased their clout during the war years. But, it must be emphasized, many union efforts did not result in lasting gains and that was often true of efforts that affected women workers. The Martin Bomber Plant was the biggest organization plum as far as the local labor movement was concerned. More workers were employed there than perhaps in the entire Omaha packing industry, and both AFL and CIO unions vied with each other to win bargaining rights for the work force. The packing house workers helped the CIO's United Automobile Workers (UAW) in their efforts, while AFL unions backed the Machinists for the bulk of the aircraft workers.[66] Finally, in 1944, the UAW won bargaining rights for most of the Martin employees, but the war ended before actual bargaining began.[67] Some other local organization efforts proved even less successful.

Brandeis Department Store was downtown Omaha's biggest store. Despite extensive efforts, the labor movement was unable to successfully unionize a majority of the store's work force. Two short strikes occurred in early 1943. In late January, five women elevator operators "stalled their cars between floors . . . in an effort to bring about a meeting between their bargaining representatives, Building Service Employees Union." They were arrested and fired from their jobs, and a sizeable number of employees went out on strike. After being released, the fired women joined the picket line. The AFL's central labor body supported their cause and a temporary truce was reached. Although the fired employees were reinstated, a second walkout occurred when the store fired another woman employee who also was a union member. Ultimately, the workers went back to their jobs when the National Labor Relations Board agreed to accept jurisdiction. A NLRB election was held, but the joint council of several AFL unions was defeated by a narrow margin.[68] The Brandeis dispute continued, but the AFL unions suffered a clear setback.

The war had brought unprecedented job opportunities for women. Thousands had gone to work for the first time and many others acquired better-paying positions. When hostilities ceased, however, massive layoffs ensued and women were among the first to go. A *World-Herald* story of Mid-August of 1945 was headed: "Omaha Labor Surplus Seen by October 15."[69] Within the previous week the Martin plant had laid off close to half of its employees, and was well on the way to terminating most of the remaining ones. The company president, however, minimized the impact of the job cuts. Paraphrasing him, a *World-Herald* account stated:

> *Of the force of slightly more than 10 thousand, four thousand were women, most of whom have little desire to continue working. They are largely sweethearts and wives of service men, Mr. Hartson explained and will not be a vital force in the labor movement.*[70]

Such sentiments were widely held and there seemingly was little attention paid to the problem facing newly laid-off women who sought to continue working.

Although the lay-offs at the bomber plant were more abrupt, many women in other jobs lacked seniority to keep their positions after servicemen returned. That situation accounted for the departure of wartime women workers in local breweries and some other establishments.[71] Episodes involving women bartenders and taxi cab drivers highlighted another dimension of the problem facing women workers. A city ordinance and state statute prohibited women from tending bar, but wartime shortages had resulted in a relaxation of such restrictions. With the end of the war, however, the AFL's Bartenders Union sought the enforcement of the prohibition. (It was reported that the local only had two women members.) On the other hand, CIO spokesmen opposed this move, one of them stating: "it's undemocratic if we deny women the right to work in any industry."[72] The president of the AFL's cab drivers also favored the withdrawal of women from taxis, but Omaha's CIO cab drivers union favored their continuation. At the time, there were 36 women "cabbies"[73] These instances reflect both the changing employment situation in the postwar period, as well as historically different tendencies assumed by the rival labor federations. The CIO, generally speaking, had been more supportive of women and minorities than many AFL unions. Women and minorities often made up a sizeable portion of the work force in the occupations CIO unions sought to organize and that obviously affected their positions on social issues. AFL unions, on the other hand, often represented workers who were overwhelmingly male and in predominantly male jobs. It is understandable, then, that CIO unions might be more inclined to defend the proposition: "it's undemocratic if we deny women the right to work in any industry."

Such discussions may seem distant today even after the recent defeat of ERA. Job opportunities, at least for some women, have opened up significantly in terms of occupations and now a larger percentage of the workforce is female than during the war years. It also should be noted that even in the immediate postwar era large numbers of women continued to hold jobs. In some cases, they were active unionists and made positive contributions to their union's history in that era. Many of the most important episodes and developments involving women within the labor movement occurred in the years after World War II. Locally, telephone operators joined a nation-wide work stoppage called by the National Federation of Telephone Workers on October 5, 1945. A front page *World-Herald* photograph showed a large number of women voting to authorize a strike "if necessary."[74] Less than two years later, Northwestern Bell operators took part in a five week strike, which stands as part of the background of the formation of the Communication Workers of America.[75] Their union sisters in the packing houses participated in a one week stoppage in 1946 and a ten week strike in 1948. Other topics could be discussed, but these will suffice.

New developments unfolded, but some earlier patterns established in previous decades also continued. Many times women unionists still found it difficult to be active in their unions because of their responsibilities as homemaker and mother; many times they still found it difficult to be taken seriously by their union brothers; many times they still found it difficult to be considered an integral and vital part of the labor movement. Obviously, there have been significant advances. Omaha's "Union Maids" have traveled a long way over time, but they should not be faulted if occasionally some of them wonder whether or not they have gotten very far.

Notes

1. Most of the first paragraph, as well as some other material in this essay, is taken from an article which appeared in the Omaha *Labor Chronicle*. See Bill Pratt, "Notes from the Past," Omaha *Labor Chronicle*, June, 1981.

2. For brief surveys of Nebraska and Omaha labor history, see Federal Writers' Project of Works Progress Administration, "Omaha: A Guide to the City and Environs, Volume I: The General Background" (unpublished), Omaha Public Library; Lowell Russell Beebe, "History of Labor Organiza-

tion and Legislation in Nebraska to 1918" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1938); Bill Pratt, *Omaha in the Making of Nebraska Labor History* (Omaha: Ad Hoc Committee for the study of Nebraska Labor History, 1981), 28 pp.

3. Jonathan E. Garlock, "A Structual Analysis of the Knights of Labor: A Prolegomenon to the History of the Producing Classes" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1974), p. 327.

4. Omaha *Bee* July 5, 1887. This story was reprinted in the *Western Laborer,* September 6, 1913.

5. Omaha *Evening World-Herald,* July 22, 1898; August 23, 1898; September 2, 1889.

6. *Western Laborer,* July 1, 1893.

7. *Evening World-Herald,* January 18, 1894.

8. *Western Laborer,* August 3, 1895.

9. *Evening World-Herald,* April 5, 1899.

10. *Western Laborer,* November 27, 1897. This article is headed: "STOP SLANDERING WOMEN." See the Labor Bulletin's response in Omaha *Labor Bulletin,* December 4, 1897. The editors of these two weekly labor papers often were on different sides of issues.

11. *Western Laborer,* January 22, 1916.

12. *Morning World-Herald,* April 22, 1940.

13. David Brody, *The Butcher Workman: A Study of Unionization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 41-42.

14. *Western Laborer,* July 16, 1898; July 23, 1898.

15. *Evening World-Herald,* January 1, 1901.

16. *Ibid.,* December 17 22, 29, 1902.

17. For an account of the 1904 strike, see Jerry Bexten, "The Great Packinghouse Strike of 1904: South Omaha" (unpublished manuscript).

18. Omaha *Daily News,* July 15, 1904.

19. *Ibid.,* July 23, 1904. A Nebraska Bureau of Labor report stated that 50 women were involved in the strike. See *Ninth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics for the State of Nebraska, 1903-1904 (Lincoln, 1905),* p. 78. This estimate may be too low, however.

20. *Western Laborer,* September 4, 1909.

21. *Evening World-Herald,* September 2, 1913.

22. *Morning World-Herald,* March 7, 1914.

23. *Daily News,* March 8, 1914.

24. *Ibid.,* March 17, 1914. Munson also spoke at another meeting under the auspices of the Central Labor Union in August of that year. A newspaper account of the meeting suggested the auxiliary role that women traditionally assumed: "That women workers for equal suffrage can bake cake was demonstrated at last night's social meeting of The Central Labor Union, when a number of tasty cakes were served by the suffrage workers themselves, with the ice cream furnished by the organization." *Morning World-Herald,* August 1, 1914.

25. *Bee,* September 6, 1914; *Morning World-Herald,* September 8, 1914.

26. It should be noted that two antisuffrage speakers spoke at a Central Labor Union meeting in early October of 1914. *Morning World-Herald,* October 4, 1914.

27. *Daily News,* September 6, 1917. The *Daily News* ran a front page photograph headed: "Women

Packing House Strikers in Front of Plant." *Ibid.*, September 7, 1917.

28. *Evening World-Herald* September 7, 1917.

29. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1917.

30. *Ibid.*, September 12, 1917. The *World-Herald* observed: "Sentiment among the strikers was that although the wage increase was no more than the packers offered a week ago, still the strike had gained many points which otherwise would have been lost."

31. *Evening World-Herald*, September 17, 1917.

32. *Ibid.*, November 2, 1918; November 16, 1918.

33. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1918.

34. See Michael L. Lawson, "Omaha, A City in Ferment: Summer of 1919," *Nebraska History*, p. 58 (Fall, 1977), pp. 395-417.

35. *The World-Herald* estimated that between 10,000 and 20,000 people participated, while the *Bee* reported that "[m]ore than 10,000" were in the parade.

36. The major work treating American labor history in the postwar decade is Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker 1920-1933* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1966).

37. *Bee*, December 8, 1921.

38. *Daily News*, December 22, 1921.

39. *Ibid.*, December 20, 1921.

40. *Mid-West Labor News*, December 23, 1921.

41. *Daily News*, December 29, 1921. Helen Keller, then in Omaha for a speaking engagement, gave $100 to the strikers and a statement which said in part: "I am ashamed of the comforts I enjoy when I think of your misery. I cannot enjoy the pleasure that comes to me while you are cold and hungry. I cannot be free while you are bound. You are a part of the great struggle for freedom and justice going on all over the world." *Bee*, December 26, 1921.

42. *Mid-West Labor News*, November 10, 1922. The antipicketing measure had been enacted into law in 1921, but a union-sponsored petition drive was able to force a referendum vote on it in the 1922 election.

43. George R. Leighton, "Omaha, Nebraska [:] The Glory is Departed-Part II, *Harper's Magazine*, 177 (August, 1938), p. 326.

44. *The Unionist*, December 1, 22, 1933.

45. *Bee-News*, November 28, 1936; *Evening World-Herald*, December 2, 1936; *The Unionist*, December 4, 1936.

46. *The Unionist*, June 17, 24, 1932; July 8, 1932.

47. *The Unionist*, January 1, 1932.

48. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1932.

49. *Ibid.*, November 4, 1938; January 20, 1939.

50. *Ibid.*, March 14, 1930.

51. *Ibid.*, June 1, 1934.

52. Personal interviews with Nels Peterson, December 23, 1980; Hubert "Red" Lockard, February 26, 1980

53. Personal interview with Vida Morrison, May 23, 1981; a clipping [c. 1937], in Vida Morrison's possession, indicates that she was elected as a trustee of Local 153 at the same time her husband was elected its president.

54. Minutes of District 3, P.W.O.C. Conference, February 6-7, 1943, United Packinghouse Workers of America Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

55. For discussion of Omaha women

during World War II, see Patricia Blackman, "The Role of Women in Omaha During World War II" (unpublished manuscript). This paper covers a wide range of women's wartime activities and was of considerable use to me for this section on the World War II era. With one exception, however, it is not concerned with organized labor.

56. "We are now getting grievances from some of the plants concerning women's rate on men's jobs. My suspicions are that they may run into several hundred before the war is over." A.T. Stephens to Sam Sponseller, May 12, 1943, UPWA Collection. Stephens was then PWOC director for District 3, which took in Iowa and Nebraska.

57. *Evening World-Herald*, July 17, 1943. The 15,000 figure seems exaggerated.

58. Telephone conversation with Rowena Moore, September 19, 1982. In her case, she had had earlier experience in the Cudahy plant. A brief conversation with Patricia Blackman prior to this telephone conversation helped focus some of my inquiries to Ms. Moore, who had also provided her with information.

59. *Evening World-Herald*, October 18, 1944.

60. Jerold Simmons kindly shared materials from his research on the Martin Bomber Plant with me that were of use in this section on the World War II era.

61. Blackman, "The Role of Women in Omaha During World War II;" telephone conversation with Donald Filbert, September 19, 1982.

62. See Blackman, "The Role of Women in Omaha During World War II." One *World-Herald* article was headed: "One Man, 3,000 Women Take Aircraft Work Training." *Evening World-Herald*, January 9, 1943.

63. "How Nebraska Arms Our Army," *Sunday World-Herald Magazine*. November 19, 1944.

64. Personal interview with Henry A. McCourt, February 6, 1981 (breweries); Claire Conley, "'I've Been Working on the Railroad,'" *Sunday World-Herald Magazine*, September 19, 1943 (railroads); *Evening World-Herald*, March 9, 1944 (streetcars); March 8, 1943 and October 11, 1945 (taxi cabs); October 5, 1945 (bartending); July 7, 1943 (construction labor). See also Blackman, "The Role of Women in Omaha During World War II."

65. One student of the subject wrote: "Unions were growing in Nebraska and the second World War provided organized labor with perhaps the greatest opportunity in its history to extend union organization and influence." Patricia Lou Parsons, "Organized Labor in Nebraska During World War II" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1950).

66. In mid-1943, a *World-Herald* reporter wrote: "The Martin Company employs more people than all the packing houses put together." Edward Morrow, "50,000 Will Seek Jobs," *Evening World-Herald*, July 2, 1943. For AFL-CIO rivalry, see *Ibid.*, February 19, 1942.

67. Although the UAW won bargaining rights for most of the plant's employees, the Operating Engineers (AFL) and the Carpenters (AFL) were also certified. *Evening World-Herald*, March 19, 1944. A telephone conversation with Donald

Filbert, who had worked in the Martin plant's personnel office, indicated that a contract was not negotiated.

68. A detailed account of the Brandeis controversy, which involved a great amount of NLRB activity, is found in Parsons, "Organized Labor in Nebraska During World War II," pp. 33-52. For the story on the five elevator operators, see *The Unionist*, January 29, 1943 (source of quotation). It should be noted that the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (CIO) did win a representation election for alteration employees, but they constituted a small percentage of the overall work force. *Evening World-Herald*, March 30, 1943.

69. *Morning World-Herald*, August 19, 1945.

70. *Ibid.*, August 21, 1945. Emphasis added.

71. Personal interview with Henry A. McCourt, February 6, 1981 (breweries)

72. *Evening World-Herald*, October 5, 11, 1945.

73. *Ibid.*, October 11, 1945. The AFL cab drivers union president reportedly said: "Taxicab driving is not the right kind of work for women. The sooner they get out the better."

74. *Morning World-Herald*, October 6, 1945.

75. For the end of the 1947 strike, see *Evening World-Herald*, May 13, 1947. On the formation of the CWA, see Thomas R. Brooks, *Communications Workers of America: The Story of a Union* (New York: Mason/Charter, 1977).

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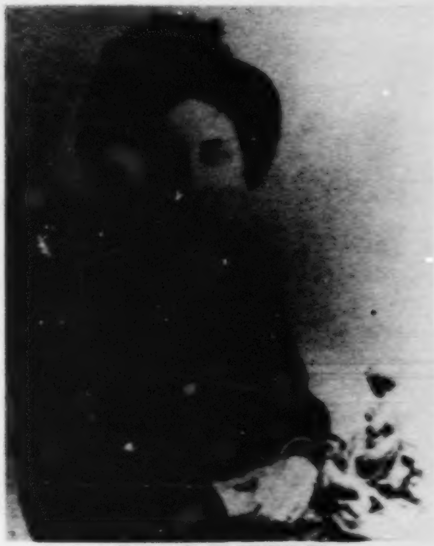
LAFLESCHE SISTERS



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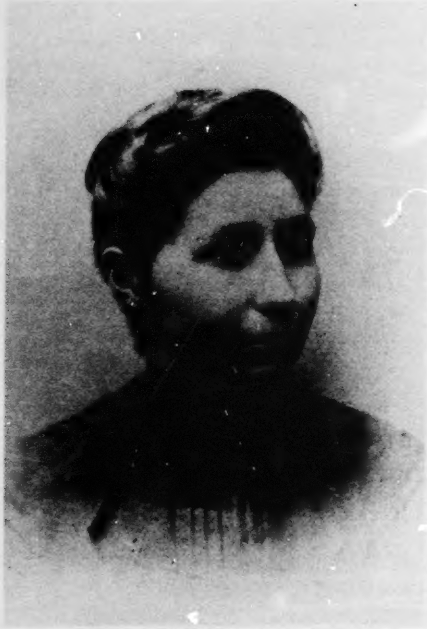

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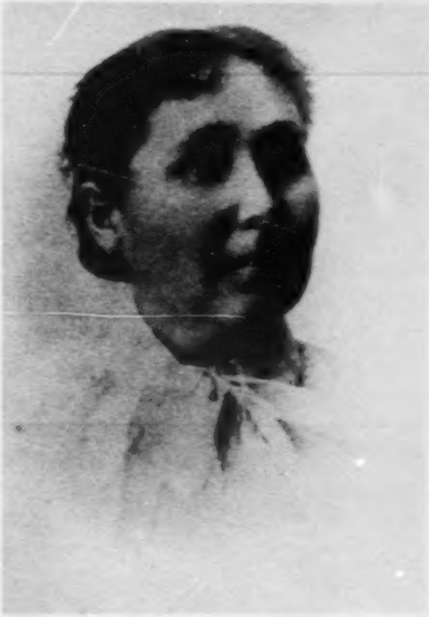

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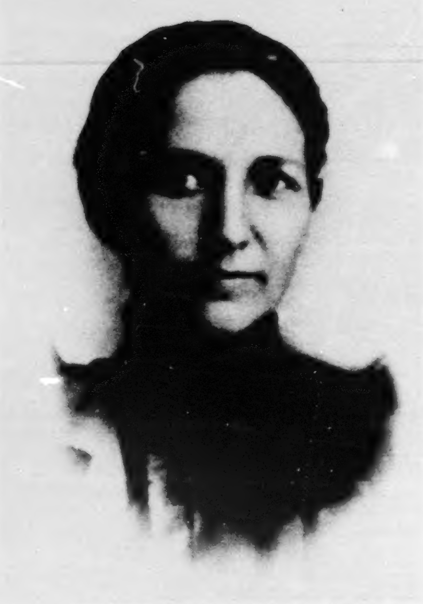

MARGUERITE

Photographs courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society

THE LAFLESCHE SISTERS

Susette, Rosalie, Marguerite, Lucy, Susan

by Anne P. Diffendal

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The LaFlesche sisters were daughters of Joseph LaFlesche, Jr. (1822-1888), the last recognized chief of the Omaha tribe. Theirs was the generation forced to adapt to the destruction of their tribal system. Joseph LaFlesche knew that his children would need to live, work, and communicate with the whites. He set an example for the tribe in his own life and in the ways that he raised and educated his children. These children, his daughters especially, played important roles in the transition. They spoke and acted not only for the Omaha, but for Indian rights generally in the white society. They acted as interpreters and translators at formal meetings in Washington and in Nebraska as well as for individuals on the reservation. They taught, healed, and provided physical and spiritual help to their tribe.

The Omaha, like other tribes encountered by French and Spanish explorers on the Plains in the mid-seventeenth century, had moved there relatively recently. Tribal traditions suggest an early home in the Ohio Valley and a later move west and north across the Missouri. They lived a seasonal existence. During the spring and fall they occupied villages of earthlodges, houses made of a framework of rafters overlaid with earth. During the winter, the villages broke up and people went to live in tipis in small camps in sheltered ravines to escape the winds. In the spring, gardens were planted near the earthlodge villages, and the tribe set out on the annual buffalo hunt, returning when the corn was ripe for harvest.

The first disturbance in this cycle came with the fur trade. The introduction of guns and steel traps reinforced the Indian's ability to obtain game to supply the heightened demand for furs, and the women's labor in dressing skins was enormously increased. This first period of contact with the whites drew to a close almost contemporaneously with the influx of white settlers, the establishment of an agency and a Presbyterian mission, and the disappearance of the buffalo. The Omaha were therefore called upon to make a series of adjustments—to the departure of the buffalo, to the curtailment of their trapping area, to the loss of power by their own chiefs, to the pervasive influence of Christianity, and to the government plans for their improvement.

In a series of treaties the Omaha had relinquished their lands east of the Missouri. Between 1836 and 1854 the Omaha villages were located near Bellevue, Nebraska. In 1854 they ceded their hunting grounds west of the Missouri in exchange for 300,000 acres of land bordering on the Missouri about seventy miles north of the present city of Omaha. A cash annuity, a saw mill, a grist mill, and a blacksmith shop were also promised.

Joseph LaFlesche was a member of the group which traveled to Washington to sign this agreement on behalf of the Omaha. The son of Joseph LaFlesche, Sr., a French trader, and an Indian woman who was either Omaha or Ponca, lived as child for some time among the Sioux and also with his father in St. Louis. Joseph learned to speak French, Dakota, and other Indian languages besides Omaha. Through his experiences with many tribes and his observations of the white man, Joseph became convinced that the power of the whites would prevail and that the Indians must learn new ways and work with the whites rather than against them. He spent time with the older men to learn about tribal traditions, ceremonies, and rites so that he might understand how changes could be made. He also decided to live with the Omaha and gain a place of influence with them. Big Elk, one of the principal chiefs of the Omaha, was also greatly concerned about the problems that the new ways would bring. He adopted Joseph, who took his father's place after Big Elk's death in 1853.

The decades of the mid-nineteenth century were difficult for the Omaha. Slaughter of the buffalo herds had decimated the supply of game. After 1876 there were no more annual hunts by the Omaha. Thus they not only lost an important source of food but also the traditions and ceremonies which were associated with the hunt. Continuity disappeared from the tribal system. Joseph LaFlesche determined to lead his tribe in the adjustments. He converted to Christianity. He built a two-story frame house like those of the whites on the reservation. He also tried to prepare his children for life under the new circumstances. For example, he refused to have his daughters tattooed or his sons' ears pierced, reasoning that such marks would handicap them in dealing with whites. Joseph also encouraged the education of his family.

According to Omaha custom, Joseph took several wives, and he had children by two of them. He had four daughters and one son by Mary Gale, herself the daughter of Nicomi (an Omaha-Otoe-Iowa) and of John Gale (a U.S. Army surgeon). He had one daughter and two sons by Ta-in-ne (an Omaha). All of the children were educated at the mission and agency schools on the reservation; most of them attended either the Elizabeth Institute for Young Ladies in New Jersey or the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia or both.

SUSETTE

Susette, born in 1854, was the second child and first daughter of Joseph and Mary. It was in the year of her birth that the Omaha gave up their Nebraska hunting grounds and agreed to move to the reservation. At the age of eight Susette began attending the Presbyterian mission school. The mission and its school greatly influenced the lives of the LaFlesche family and other members of the tribe. The Presbyterians had first established a permanent mission in 1845 at Bellevue. When the Omaha moved north to the reservation, the mission followed in 1857. A boarding and day school was maintained there for nearly thirty years. The children were taught to speak, read, and write English. The boys learned farming and the care of stock; the girls were taught to cook and to sew. This school was a very important means of introducing the young Omaha to their new way of life.

Through the mission, Susette was sent to the Elizabeth Institute for Young Ladies in New Jersey, the first of her tribe to attend an Eastern school. She returned in 1873 after four years of study and taught for some time in the reservation school.

Susete was bored and frustrated after her stimulating introduction to white culture. Then in 1877 events occurred which were eventually to bring Susette to national attention and thus to begin her life as a publicist for Indian rights. In that year the federal government removed the Ponca, sister tribe to the Omaha, from their lands on the Nebraska-Dakota border to Indian Territory (later the state of Oklahoma). The tribe endured severe hardships which resulted in many deaths. In 1879 Standing Bear, Chief of the Ponca, returned to his homeland to bury his son. He was pursued, arrested, and ordered back to Indian Territory. The resulting case in the Omaha Federal District Court generated enormous publicity and drew national attention. Thomas H. Tibbles of the Omaha *Herald*, along with many others, came to Standing Bear's defense and helped bring about his release, following the decision of Judge Elmer Dundy, on the principle that an Indian is a person in the eyes of the law.

After the trial, Tibbles organized a tour of the East, taking with him Standing Bear, Susette as interpreter, and her brother Francis (called Frank by the family) as chaperon and interpreter. The tour was a great success. The group was received warmly and attracted the interest of the press at all of their stops. Susette was particularly impressive—quiet, attractive, and speaking excellent English. She was perceived as the image of an Indian princess and became known as "Bright Eyes," the English translation of her Omaha name, Inshata-Theumba. Many Easterners were inspired to act on behalf of Indian causes. Leading political and literary figures in Boston organized the Boston Indian Citizenship Committee and lobbied for reform in Washington.

Returning from this first tour, Susette and Tibbles, who had been recently widowed, were married in 1881. Susette thereby became the stepmother to his two small daughters. From then until 1900, the Tibbles were away from the reservation as often as they were on it. They traveled to speak on behalf of Indian rights and to the jobs T.H. took on various newspapers. In 1886 they went on a ten month lecture tour of England for the Pond Lyceum Bureau. By 1890 Tibbles had returned to his job with the Omaha *Herald*. In December of that year he and Susette went to the Pine Ridge Agency to gather information about the Sioux unrest and the Battle of Wounded Knee. They spent 1893-95 in Washington, D.C. In the early 1890s Tibbles had joined the Populist Party, and in 1895 the family moved to Lincoln where he edited the weekly *Independent*, a Populist newspaper.

Susette continued to give public lectures and to appear before official government boards and commissions. She is known to have written and helped T.H. in his editorial work. Exactly what she herself wrote is not certain, however, as most of it appeared as unsigned articles or editorials in newspapers and magazines.

During the 1880s and 1890s, the Tibbles differed with the rest of the LaFlesche family over which of the needs of the Omaha were primary. Susette and T.H. felt that full citizenship for Indians must come first and be the foundation for all other reforms. Others in the family believed that laws could not change habits and ways of thinking and consequently that Indians needed education and training in many areas at once.

Differences over two issues affecting the Omaha reflected these positions. The Tibbles were opposed to a voluntary effort by the tribe to set up a self-government by dividing the reservation into three districts with elected officials. This experiment was short-lived because of the Omaha's inexperience with such a political organization.

Yet another project was cooperative grazing, organized by Susette's sister Rosalie and her husband Edward Farley. Begun in 1884 with a twenty-year lease on several thousand acres of tribal land, the pasture operation developed into a large business. The Farleys wanted to see the Omaha use their land productively and to help the tribe develop self-sufficiency. This project caused many disputes and long legal battles over the use and ownership of the land and over the disposition of the profits.

Differences among family members over these economic and political questions did not, however, result in personal estrangements. Due to her ill health, Susette and T.H. moved to her allotment near Bancroft in 1902, and Susette died there the following year.

Rosalie

In contrast to Susette, who devoted her attention to working for Indian rights within the larger society, Rosalie remained on the reservation, assisting in a variety of ways to ease the way for the tribe and its individual members. Born in 1861, she attended mission and government schools on the reservation. In 1880 she married Edward Farley, the son of Irish immigrants who had settled in Indiana in the 1850s. Ed and Rosalie had ten children, eight of whom grew to adulthood. Rosalie remained at home, on the reservation. Because she spoke English well, but was familiar with tribal ways, her house became a center for both Indians and whites. The Omaha came often for help. Many Easterners arrived to visit the schools, the mission, and the agency. They usually came to see Rosalie; many also stayed at her house and became friends.

The ethnologist Alice Fletcher met Rosalie when she began to study the Omaha in 1881. This occasion marked the beginning of a long and close friendship between the two women. Fletcher, along with Susette and Tibbles, was responsible for seeing through Congress in 1882 a law which granted the Omaha their lands in severalty. Each man, woman, and child would recieve a portion of the tribal land, which was secured by a patent held in trust by the government for twenty-five years, during which time the land was not taxable and could not be encumbered or sold. At the end of the trust period, the patents would be given to the original allottees or their heirs. This act also placed the Omaha under the laws of the state of Nebraska, both civil and criminal. Fletcher was appointed Special Agent to allot the land with Frank LaFlesche as her interpreter and assistant.

The Farleys selected their land at the southern end of the reservation not far from the new town of Bancroft, near the allotments of others in the LaFlesche family. Ed and Rosalie, who had both been teaching at the mission school, moved to their land in 1884. In that year also was begun the Farley pasture—the cooperative grazing project.

The government expected that the Indians would support themselves by raising grain and livestock. Additionally, white men were allowed to graze cattle on the reservation by paying a fee to the agent. Because the cattle were generally not herded but allowed to roam free, they grazed over planted fields and gardens as well as pasture. Fletcher suggested that the Indians fence the cattle rather than the crops and set up a cooperative grazing program.

Ed Farley followed this advice, taking out a twenty-year lease on 18,000 acres of unallotted lands. The Indians might put in their cattle at no cost; the whites would pay a fee. The pasture developed into a big business which also brought many problems. Difficulties arose from changing government regulations or the interpretation of those regulations regarding leasing, manipulations of white speculators, long-standing factions and quarrels within the tribe, and jealousies and misunderstandings as Ed improved his own stock and made profits from the pasture.

Rosalie kept the accounts and conducted all of the business correspondence. Because the pasture project operated through the tribe, she also handled all of the contacts with the men of the council, and acted as interpreter between Ed and the tribal leaders who did not speak English. In addition, Rosalie managed many small funds resulting from Susette's appeals in the East. One important source of money was the Connecticut Women's Indian Association, headed by Sara T. Kenney of Hartford, which helped Indians to build houses and acquire farm equipment. Rosalie also kept the separate accounts of money owed by individual Omaha to merchants and money lenders in Bancroft and would see that these debts were settled on government payment day.

Rosalie was the correspondent through whom all family news was transmitted. It is due to her, through her children and grandchildren, that the few remaining LaFlesche family letters and papers have survived.

Rosalie helped Alice Fletcher and Frank collect and record information about the traditional Omaha society and customs before all such knowledge was lost upon the deaths of the oldest members of the tribe. She herself, not well for several years, died in 1900 at the age of thirty-nine.

Marguetite

Marguerite, the third of Joseph's daughters, was born in 1862. Educated at the mission and agency schools like her sisters, she studied at the Elizabeth Institute from 1879 to 1882 and then returned to the reservation where she taught.

In 1884 she went to the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, a school founded after the Civil War to train freed slaves. By 1880, when the government had decided to try an experiment in educating Indians, it chose Hampton as the site. There Marguerite met Charles Picotte, half-French, half-Sioux, from the Yankton Agency. They both graduated in 1887 and were married the following year.

Marguerite and Charles lived on the Omaha reservation where he took charge of most of the LaFlesche family land and she taught in the agency school. After Charles died in 1888, Marguerite continued to teach there, where she met Walter Diddock, a white man who taught industrial farming. They were married in 1895.

The town of Walthill was laid out in 1906, and the Diddocks were among the first to buy lots and construct a large frame house. Marguerite and her sister Susan took the lead in developing the growing community. Marguerite's home was the meeting place for many church organizations. The Diddocks were founding members, supporters, and organizers of many clubs, lecture series, concerts, and the public library. The pattern of living in Walthill, and of the Diddocks, was much like that of the whites. Marguerite lived the longest of this generation of the LaFlesches, dying in 1945 at the age of eighty-three.

Lucy

Lucy was the only one of Joseph's daughters born of his second wife Ta-in-ne. Of these women, she alone did not move frequently in white society. Born in 1865, she was educated like her sisters at reservation schools. She married Noah Leaming, a young Omaha, who took the name of LaFlesche because his family was of lower position.

Lucy and Noah with another young Omaha couple went to Hampton Institute. They were among the first married couples accepted at the school, a practice begun at the urging of Alice Fletcher. Noah returned to the reservation in 1885 and began farming. Lucy remained to graduate in 1886. She then returned to the reservation and lived on their land until her death in 1923.

Susan

Susan, born in the same year as Lucy, was the youngest of the daughters of Joseph and Mary and, like her sisters, was educated at the reservation schools. When she was fourteen years old, she went with Marguerite to the Elizabeth Institute from which she graduated in 1882. For the next two years she worked at the mission school. Then she went with sisters Marguerite and Lucy together with Lucy's husband Noah to the Hampton Institute. Susan graduated two years later as salutatorian with a gold medal for scholastic honors.

When and why Susan decided to become a physican is not known. The role of healer, however, is not unknown among Indian women. For whatever personal reasons and with the encouragement of her teachers at Hampton, she entered the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. The Women's National Indian Association, which had begun a program supporting professional training for Indians, gave her financial aid. She graduated with a M.D. degree in 1889, first in her class of thirty-six, and the first Native American woman to earn a medical degree. She interned for a year at the Women's Hospital in Philadelpia.

Then she returned to the reservation as physician for the government school. Shortly thereafter her duties were extended to include the entire tribe. She also received an appointment as medical missionary to the Omaha from the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions. For the next four years she labored to bring medical services to a tribe scattered over hilly country. The roads were poor and travel was difficult. Exhausted, she resigned to care for her mother who was very ill.

In 1894 she married Henry Picotte, brother of Charles, the deceased first husband of Marguerite. Her marriage was a surprise to her friends and family. Many of them questioned how she could combine the rigors of her work with the demands of a family. Others wondered about her choice of a husband. Though few of her family and none of her friends had known, Susan had been in love with a young Sioux she met at Hampton who had died.

The Picottes settled in Bancroft where Susan's practice included both whites and Indians. In 1905 Henry died, and Susan moved with her two small sons to the newly established town of Walthill. She built a house across the street from Marguerite and Walter Diddock. Together the two sisters sponsored religious and community groups and activities. Susan was one of the founding members of the county medical association.

Susan's work extended beyond the care of individual patients to the concern for public health. She tried to teach the Omaha about sanitation and personal hygiene. She crusaded against the use of the community drinking cup at public fountains as well as against conditions which bred the common fly.

The Omaha like other tribes, had witnessed the rise of alcoholism after the appearance of the white man made liquor readily available. Whiskey provided a convenient means of escape, especially for the Omaha men, from the problems accompanying the loss of their traditional ways. Susan, observing the social and economic ills, as well as the medical ones, caused by alcoholism, tried to combat them in a variety of ways. She spoke in favor of temperance on many public occasions in addition to her work as a Sunday School teacher and as a medical missionary. In 1906 she led a delegation to Washington which secured an agreement that every deed for property in towns established within the Omaha and Winnebago reservations would prohibit liquor.

Susan had long dreamed of having a hospital nearby. The Home Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church provided a grant, as did the Society of Friends, the Diddocks donated an acre of land on the edge of Walthill, and several fund raising events were held, including a benefit concert in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, which included selections of Omaha tribal music. The hospital was opened in 1913, serving both Indians and whites.

Susan did not enjoy its convenience for long. She died in 1915, succumbing to an infection in her ear and facial bones, perhaps cancer, from which she had suffered for many years. In tribute, the hospital was named for her.

The daughters of Joseph LaFlesche were born into the generation forced to mature on the reservation, to abandon tribal traditions, and to adapt to the ways of the white culture. They enjoyed the advantages of a good preparation through the foresight of their father. Extremely bright and attractive according to measures applied by white society, they were also very well educated by any standards of the day. All of them spent their lives working for the welfare of the Omaha, though each pursued her own course. Most of them adopted many features of the white style of life, though none of them broke completely with the past.

NOTES

Our knowledge of the Omaha tribe and of the LaFlesche family is due to a trio of remarkable women: ethnologist Alice Fletcher, anthropologist Margaret Mead, and writer Norma Kidd Green. Fletcher spent thirty years studying the Omaha. The results of her life's work were coauthored with Francis LaFlesche and published in two volumes. *The Omaha Tribe* first appeared as the 27th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution (1911) and was reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press in 1972. Primarily devoted to descriptions of traditional Omaha society and customs, it also contains a section on the tribe after white contact.

After spending the summer of 1930 on the reservation, Mead published her observations in a volume entitled *The Changing Culture of an Indian Tribe* (1932; reprinted by the AMS Press in 1969). She studied the position of women in Omaha society as a result of the new ways. Because she was attempting to develop principles which might apply generally to societies in transition, Mead omitted any particular identifying information. The tribe is named the "Antlers"; all personal and place names were changed. Though interested in the culture of the children and grandchildren of the sisters who are the subjects of the present essay, she does comment on their generation.

Green devoted years to interviews with LaFlesche family members and to research in family papers and other available sources to produce her principal work, *Iron Eye's Family: The Children of Joseph LaFlesche* (1969), sponsored by the Nebraska State Historical Society. Later she persuaded members of the family to donate the papers she had used to the Society and gave her own research files as well.

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There are two fictionalized biographies of Susette: Dorothy Clare Wilson, *Bright Eyes* (MacMillan, 1974) and Margaret Crary, *Susette LaFlesche: The Voice of the Omaha Indians* (Hawthorn Books, 1973); and one of Susan: Marion Marsh Brown, *Homeward the Arrow's Flight* (Abingdon Press, 1980).

Francis LaFlesche wrote short tales for young people about the life of the Omaha during his youth at the mission school. *The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe* was first published in 1900 and reprinted by the University of Wisconsin Press in 1963.

BESS FURMAN ARMSTRONG

Photograph courtesy of the Omaha World Herald

BESS FURMAN
1894-1969

by Vicki L. Bagrowski

Vicki L. Bagrowski is a writer and publicist who works half-time for the Lincoln-Lancaster Commission on the Status of Women as their Media Coordinator, and also runs her own free-lance writing business in Lincoln, Nebraska. Her background is in journalism.

For the first 35 years of her life, Bess Furman was a Nebraskan, in every sense of the word. She was born in Danbury in 1894 and later lived in Kearney and Omaha. Her entire family lived in Nebraska. And she had a great affinity for the open plains of her home state.

For the last 39 years of her life, however, Bess Furman was a committed Washingtonian, reveling in the political action that only the nation's capitol can bring.

There are certain people who are destined to live in places that offer exactly what they need in their lives. Theatre people gravitate to New York, film-makers to Hollywood, musicians to Nashville. It is only natural that a writing talent such as Bess Furman's should be drawn to the city best known for its politics and political figures. Moving to Washington, D.C. was not a conscious goal for Furman; it was not something she had worked toward. Nor would she have predicted that she was to become a pioneer in the field of political journalism, as well as a friend to a President and First Lady. All Bess Furman knew as she grew up in Nebraska was writing.

It is said some children are born with silver spoons in their mouths. If that is so, Bess Furman was not among them. Instead, it could be said she was born with a proofing pencil in her hand. Furman's childhood consisted of the smell of printers' ink and the clack of the linotype in her father's newspaper plant in Danbury, Nebraska. Although her father was the official editor of the *Danbury News*, the operation was clearly a family enterprise with her mother and all five children helping out. The pull of "newspapering" was so strong, that all but one of the children would eventually make careers in that field. It was surely not surprising that Bess would pursue writing since her first by-lined story was published at the age of seven.

After attending college in Kearney, where she served as the editor of *The Antelope*, Furman took a reporting job on the *Kearney Daily Hub*. From there, she went to Omaha to work on the Omaha *Bee-News*. Furman's career could easily have run its course in that city, for she was comfortable there. She enjoyed the active Little Italy and intellectual Bohemian areas that flourished in the Omaha of the 1920's. "Omaha's happenings," she said, "had color and charm that make for good newspaper copy."[1]

But a series of circumstances were to alter her loyalty to the Omaha *Bee-News* and cause her career to take a dramatic shift. In 1928, William Randolph Hearst bought the *Bee-News* and implemented several staffing and editoral changes at the paper. Hearst was vehemently opposed to Al Smith, the Democrat then challenging Herbert Hoover for the Presidency. Ever since Smith had refused to run on the same ticket with Hearst for the 1922 gubernatorial election in New York--instead running against Hearst and defeating him--Hearst had no kind words for Smith. So, Hearst Enterprises brought in a pro-Hoover Republican as publisher of the *Bee-News* and began to issue canned pro-Hoover editorials from the Hearst Syndicate headquarters.

This turn of events had an impact on Bess Furman who was assigned to do the "color stories" on the presidential campaign. First, she covered Hoover's trip to Iowa and found a disappointingly stiff and recalcitrant man who wouldn't pose for photographers or talk to the press about growing up in the midwest. And she found Mrs. Hoover even more loath to speak with reporters, except to complain about misleading articles.

Said Furman, "We took the hint and departed, wondering audibly ... what the Hoovers thought they were out there for if it wasn't to get campaign publicity, and how did they think the papers would get the facts straight if they didn't give them the facts."[2]

From the campaign, Furman went directly to the Smith campaign tour and found a very different candidate: one with an affable nature, who liked reporters and who delivered speeches in a way that held the crowd spellbound. Her color piece on Smith turned out so well that Furman received a first prize in newswriting from *Bockman* magazine.

After that first-hand experience with the two candidates, the increasingly heavy volume of pro-Hoover articles coming from Hearst headquarters, coupled with directives to cut back on local reporters' coverage of the campaign, caused Furman to chafe in her once enjoyable job at the *Bee-News*.

When Byron Price, head of the Washington Bureau of the Associated Press–whom Furman had met briefly–offered her a job in the capital, Furman decided it was time to leave. So, in April of 1929, she took a train to Washington, D.C. to begin her new job at a starting salary of $240 per month.

Initially, Furman found D.C. to be slower paced than Omaha; more the Southern town. However, her characterization of Capitol Hill was anything but slow. She compared it to a calliope in which "the House shrills the high part and the Senate rumbles the bass. And the Supreme Court, from time to time, emits a loud clear note that says 'this is it.'"

Because she was new to the Associated Press and to the Washington press corps, Furman was assigned to the "outer edges" of government. Her first beat included agencies such as the Public Health Service, the Census Bureau, the Red Cross and the Bureau of Home Economics. Among the "lower-ranking" agencies to which she was assigned were the Women's Bureau and the Children's Bureau; a fortunate assignment, as it turned out, for they were soon embroiled in a political battle that would change Furman from a Washington novice to an insider.

In 1930, the White House called a Conference on Child Health and Protection. Mary Margaret McBride was placed in charge of publicizing the reports issued by the Conference and was to serve as liaison to the press. Furman's reportage of the Conference began routinely, working with McBride on the issues being raised. However, the Conference soon dissolved into a fighting match over whether to abolish the Children's Bureau and transfer its responsibilities over to Health and Welfare. It soon became apparent that the (mostly male) physicians favored the abolishment, while the (mostly female) social workers opposed it. Caught in the middle of the scuffle was Grace Abbot, chief of the Children's Bureau and favorite of many women--including New York Labor Commissioner Frances Perkins--for Secretary of Labor.

Abbott had become a friend to Furman as she routinely checked in at the Children's Bureau for news. Said Furnam, "Grace Abbott ... was the person I sought out whenever I got homesick in those early days. Having grown up in Grand Island, Nebraska, Miss Abbott was as native to me as strong breezes over wheatfields."[4]

The political in-fighting grew stronger as the White House Conference continued and Furman did her best to save the reports Mary Margaret McBride saw become obscured by the battle. In the end, the Children's Bureau was saved, but the women paid the price of having Grace Abbott passed over in the selection of Labor Secretary. This was clearly seen as a slap in the face, particularly since Frances Perkins had described Abbot as "conspicuously eligible" for the post.

Bess Furman's beat began to widen. For some time, she had been assigned to cover Mrs. Hoover and the social side of the White House, but since Mrs. Hoover still made it hard for reporters to get inside stories from her, Furman had taken to more creative approaches. One Christmas Eve, when a group of Girl Scouts were to sing carols for a party of guests at the White House, Furman managed to smuggle a uniform and get her story by posing as one of the singing scouts.

Her ability to get her story when other reporters couldn't and her work on the White House Conference debacle, earned Furman a promotion to House reporter for the AP.

At that time, there was no woman regularly assigned to the House of Representatives from any press association. Bess Furman was the first.

And, as the first woman to cover the House, she was also the first to be allowed "courtesy of the floor," a tradition whereby one representative from each press group could actually go down on the floor of the House from their usual gallery press box. The first time Furman went down to the floor for AP, to examine at a closer range an exhibit of illegal narcotics during debate on a bill concerning smuggling, the doorman wouldn't let her in. So, Furman had to go back to the gallery to get a written okay from the press superintendent. Once the doorman was satisfied and Furman finally did get in, she went immediately to the exhibit and began her inspection. While she was engrossed in that, the Representative from Oklahoma stood to say," Rising to a point of parliamentary procedure I'd like to know who that young lady is up there and what she is doing." The doorman was immediately sent for and the written note produced for House Speaker Nicholas Longworth, who then explained. Said the Oklahoma man, "Then out of courtesy to the Associated Press, I shall ask that my query on parliamentary procedure be expunged from the record." The entire time this exchange was taking place, Furman was so involved with the exhibit that she missed every word that was said. She, therefore, had absolutely no idea why she faced a grinning press corps waiting for her when she returned to the gallery.[5]

Although Bess Furman was by now being assigned the "hard news" of Washington, the AP still turned to her for any articles they wanted about the women of D.C., whether women in Congress or government, or wives of Congressmen and Cabinet members. Furman enjoyed these assignments because she found several bright, interesting women among them. One of these was Alice Roosevelt Longworth who often came to the House to hear the floor debates while Furman was there. All the reporters knew something interesting was about to happen whenever Alice showed up in their gallery, Furman said, because they "well knew that Alice disdained the dull moment." Another woman that Furman found especially interesting and with whom she became good friends was Ruth Bryan Owen, Representative from Florida and daughter of Nebraska's William Jennings Bryan. It was Owen who was Furman's witness at her wedding to Robert B. Armstrong, Jr., a fellow reporter attached to the *Los Angeles Times* Washington Bureau. Although Furman was to refer to the "Armstrong household" informally and in social contexts she was probably one of the few women of the 1930's who chose to retain her birth name after marriage. In all successive articles, books and professional affiliations, she was to remain Bess Furman the rest of her life.

By 1932, Furman was feeling totally at home in Washington. By covering the woman's angle in the presidential election, she was able to get even closer to the women leaders of the country. Under Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration, women were coming into their own positions of importance. Furman had correctly predicted, in 1932, that Frances Perkins would be appointed Secretary of Labor. Furman also had the pleasure of seeing her friend Ruth Bryan Owen named as the first woman ambassador for the United States. All too often, however, it was Furman's assignment to report the fashion and social scene of Cabinet and Congressional wives. But, in this administration, she found many of them turning to volunteer service on various projects so she "...vowed I'd have on the AP wires something about what the Cabinet wives had in their heads instead of about the hats they had on them."[6]

Of course, the ultimate role model for these and all women was the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. Bess Furman found Mrs. Roosevelt to be not only an excellent subject for her articles, but also an open and energetic woman who was to become a personal friend. Indeed, Furman's admiration for Eleanor Roosevelt began during the campaign and grew steadily over the 12 years she was to be First Lady. Furman was able to write scores of articles on Mrs. Roosevelt's first years, thanks to the new "tradition" of holding regular press conferences for the women reporters to describe her new projects and upcoming events. The projects were not the usual activities that First Ladies had engaged in, such as White House redecoration or social functions. While Mrs. Roosevelt did manage to make the White House more livable and hosted many receptions, her real interests were the major issues of the day such as better nutrition for the poor, slums as breeding grounds for crime and disease, the need to employ jobless single women, veteran's benefits, and the need to prevent war in Europe (which she predicted in 1933).

Through the first term, Furman was to come to know Mrs. Roosevelt well. Not only did she attend the First Lady's press conferences and interview her often on specific issues, but she also came to socialize with the Roosevelts as well. Furman and her husband Bob Armstrong were often included in gatherings at the White House and at the Roosevelts' two vacation homes: Val-Kill, which was presided over by the President's mother, and their summer home on the Hudson. Armstrong and Furman even distinguished themselves on these occasions as unofficial film documentarists, capturing many important Washingtonians in their home movies.

By the end of Roosevelt's first term, Furman was almost exclusively assigned to cover Mrs. Roosevelt and so followed her, and the entire campaign staff, in the Roosevelt re-election bid. Because women were coming into their own as a force in Washington, it was only natural that the Roosevelt campaign would establish a "feminine side" of the campaign. Mary W. Dewson was in charge of the angle and her initials M.W. came to mean "more women." Dewson and Mrs. Roosevelt arranged for several pieces of literature to be written by and for women during the campaign.

The highlight of all this action, for Furman, was the Democratic Convention of 1936. She reported that there were 219 female delegates and over 300 female alternates, more than three times the number of women delegates at the Republican Convention.

In October of 1937, well after the presidential campaign excitement had died down, Bess Furman resigned from the AP to have a baby. Although she had continued working during her pregnancy, Furman decided she wanted to quit so she could return to Nebraska to have the child. She claimed she wanted her daughter or son to be born not only with roots, but with "grassroots." So she came to McCook, where some of her family lived, and there gave birth to twins: a girl she named Ruth Eleanor (for Ruth Bryan Owen and Eleanor Roosevelt) and a son she named Robert Furman Armstrong.

Letters and telegrams came into McCook from all over the country, from fellow reporters, Congresspeople, Cabinet members, people who were friends and people whom she had covered for AP. The Roosevelts, of course, sent congratulations as did Margaret Sanger who telegraphed in reference to the twins, "Marvelous time-saving arrangement." The attention received was increased by the fact that Mrs. Roosevelt had hand-knitted a baby blanket for her and photographs of Furman and the twins (in the blanket) appeared not only in all the Nebraska papers but also in the national ones.

When Furman began her drive back to Washington, Nebraska was in the midst of one of its frequent--and miserable--dust storms. Even in winter, with snow and rain interspersed, the dust storms could become fierce. There was even talk in the 30's of transplanting the population of the midwest and plains states since their region was obviously dying. Although Furman and her brother covered the babies and themselves well and kept the car windows closed, there was dust piled an inch high over everything inside the car. The next time Furman was to return to Nebraska, she would find a healthy agriculture center, thanks in large measure to President Roosevelt's introduction of land conservation and management practices to midwest farmers and the New Deal work program of planting trees as windbreaks.

Because she wanted time with her twins, yet didn't want to keep her hand out too long, Bess Furman joined with her sister Lucille in forming Furman Features, a free-lance writing and research business. For two years, they were hired to do publicity for the National League of Women Voters and then to direct publicity for the American Association of University Women.

In 1940, Furman Features was hired by the Roosevelt campaign to produce the Rainbow Flyers, single-subject handbills--each on different colored paper--explaining in easily understandable prose some of the most complex issues of the times. Furman and her sister turned out 15 different flyers on such topics as the business status of the nation, trade agreements affecting farmers, national defense, TVA, social security, and youth programs. About 60 million of these Rainbow Flyers were distributed during the campaign. Another project in which Furman Features was involved was to publicize, in individual *counties* around the country, what the New Deal had done for their specific county.

"... In 1940 it became my increasing impression," Furman said, "that the gentlemen of the Democratic Party were suffering from a sort of creeping paralysis ... the women around there were doing about nine-tenths of the campaign work."[7]

Yet she was to later note that, of all the subsequent books written by men who had been involved in the campaign, there was little if any indication that they had been at all aware of what the women were doing.

After Pearl Harbor was attacked, there was a mad scramble in Washington to set up war agencies and bureaus. Both Furman and her sister decided one of them should contribute her skills to the war effort while the other kept Furman Features alive so it could be resumed after the war. Both of them began looking but jobs that would come open would suddenly vanish in the wake of in-fighting among the war agencies over who should do what. In May of 1942, Bess Furman finally landed a job in the Office of Facts and Figures, a new agency created to organize war information. The noted poet and author Archibald MacLeish was put in charge of the office. But, one month after she started, Furman lost the job when the office went under as a result of a showdown with the Office of Emergency Management of Information which declared that only its office should be compiling war data. However, Furman was immediately hired by Dorothy Ducas to help her direct the Magazine Section of the Office of War Information. In six months, Ducas and Furman had built it from a Section into a Division; in a year it was promoted to a Bureau. On that job, Furman was responsible for many publications, the most prominent of which was "War Jobs For Women," the first pamphlet of its kind, with a distribution of over 50,000 copies. When Congress abolished the Office of War Information, Furman was tired of the unsteadiness of public sector employment and vowed to leave as soon as something better came up.

In November, 1943, something better came up. Bess Furman was offered a position as Washington Correspondent of the *New York Times*. As she put it, "I told myself I was no longer a pert reporter; I was an ex-pert reporter. I was ready for the *New York Times*."[8]

As a *Times* reporter, Furman was to see many changes in Washington in the next 20 years. With the end of the Roosevelt administration, an era of change and progress would end. Although Furman would get to know Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower through her press assignments, she would never again feel the closeness, warmth and energy of an Eleanor Roosevelt.

After the President's death, Mrs. Roosevelt gave her last press conference; it was 12 years, 1 month and six days since she had given her first conference. Some of the women reporters present, including Furman, had been there from the beginning. After the last conference, Furman and three other reporters who had attended Mrs. Roosevelt's first such conference made a nation-wide radio broadcast evaluating the 12 years Mrs. Roosevelt was in the White House. No other First Lady would establish the open communication or regular press conferences that marked Mrs. Roosevelt's term.

In 1945, Furman was elected president of the Women's National Press Club. During her year as president, she was to organize the first national broadcast of the Press Club's annual banquet and was able to meet Winston Churchill when she sat near him at the head table for the Overseas Writers' Banquet.

In 1949, Furman published her first book, an autobiography, *Washington By-Line,* a Personal History of a Newspaperwoman. In that same year she received the Headliner Award of Theta Sigma Phi, the national journalistic sorority. In 1951, she published her second book, *White House Profile,* a history of the social side of the First Families. She also co-authored, with Ralph C. Williams, "A Profile of the United States Public Health Service, 1798-1948," published by the National Institute of Health.

During the 50's, Bess Furman would see television become a major factor not only in reporting elections and other political news, but in all news-gathering. But she was a newspaperwoman. The electronic medium was not for her. Instead, she chose to remain with the *New York Times,* covering the political scene in Washington.

In 1961, she resigned from that job to accept a post as head of the press information section of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare under President Kennedy. Because she had had ample experience both in the Washington press corps and in government offices, Furman was an ideal selection for the position.

Bess Furman retired in 1963, 62 years after she penned her first by-lined story for publication. Because she lived and worked in Washington for so long, she remained there for her retirement, until her death in May, 1969.

Notes

1. *Washington By-Line: The Personal History of a Newspaperwoman,* Bess Furman, 1949, p. 25.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 9.
3. *Ibid.,* p. 28.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 35.
5. *Ibid.,* p. 87.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 216.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 284.
8. *Ibid.,* p. 307.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Nebraska Council for the Social Studies is confronted with a significant membership problem. The problem is not necessarily just one of numbers. Rather, the problem is the distribution of members. Nearly all of the NSCSS' membership comes from the eastern portion of the state; more specifically, most members are from the Lincoln and Omaha areas.

It is certainly understandable that a sizeable percentage of the membership would be from the eastern half of the state given the population distribution of the state; yet, the lack of membership in the NSCSS from areas west of Lincoln is alarming. Of the total membership in the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies, only twenty-five members live or teach in places west of York.

One of the major objectives of the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies is to provide a professional association for those persons in Nebraska who share a common interest in social studies. Lack of statewide membership reduces the benefits of a professional association.

The geographic disproportion of membership is not the result of parochial views on the part of the officers or active members of the NSCSS. In the spring of 1979, a major Council function was held in Grand Island. In 1980, the annual meeting was held in Kearney in conjuction with state teachers convention. One year ago, an important educational workshop on legal education was organized and promoted by the Council and the Division of Social Sciences at Wayne State College. The workshop was set for Wayne and a similar workshop was being planned for parts farther west depending upon the success of the Wayne program. With the exception of program planners, there was very little interest in the workshop from teachers in the northeastern section of the state. Each one of these meetings in Greater Nebraska was designed in large part to provide for members that are not in the Lincoln and Omaha areas. Yet, attendance was low or as in the case of Wayne, nonexistent.

The council is still looking for a means whereby the organization can truly be called a state organization, but we are losing steam. There are still a few ideas to be tried, and the Executive Board of the Council is always open to suggestion. It is important that if there is to be a state association, that the problem of membership imbalance be resolved. As a member of "The Council" in good standing, will you encourage your colleagues to join with us so we can continue such worthwhile activities as our annual meetings and our journal, *Perspectives.*

Greg Adams
President, NSCSS

MUSINGS BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

"The Future and the American Dream" was the theme of the National Council for the Social Studies 62nd Annual Meeting held in Boston in November, 1982. How do we define it, achieve it, and prepare to live it in the future, especially in a future that looks bleak for thousands of people who are facing unemployment, hunger, thirst, poor health, old age with little income, inadequate shelter, war, etc? How do we prepare citizens to live in a democracy where the "American Dream" could be interpreted as a myth, as was the "melting pot" theory for thousands who could not meet the artificial requirements necessary to blend in with the greater mix of people?

What changes have taken place in society to demand a different or extended interpretation of the "American Dream"? The social sciences provide us with data to help us to clarify the changes which have occurred in American Society. In our quest to be part of the future, there is a tendency to push aside the standard-bearers and interpreters of the "American Dream" i.e., the social scientists.

Michael Annison, publisher of the *Trend Report*, was quoted in the *Social Studies Professional*, January, 1983, in reference to our transformation into an information society. Through the 1950's we were predominantly an industrial nation with approximately two-thirds of the population earning a living in manufacturing. Today, these same numbers work in information or service jobs. He also states that "an information society relies upon two essential elements: the training of minds (the business of teachers and schools) and technology (the business of the communication industry").

In another article in this same issue of the *Social Studies Professional*, NCSS Executive Director, Lynn Iglitzin states, "Not only are we witnessing a domestic shift to a local and regional emphasis, but we are also witnessing a simultaneous shift towards a global economy. . . . Explosion in world trade and instant communications through television and satellite are creating 'a global village'."

To prepare for and to arrange these trends "the movements toward an information society, regionalism, a global economy, a life-long process of education, and high technology--we see a clear need for science, mathematics and computer literacy." But at the same time, "It is equally essential to give future citizens a broadly based liberal arts background. While we grant the vital importance of math and science, we see that it is up to us to assess the basic need to educate our future citizens in the humanities and social sciences, so that they will grow up to be more than mere technicians. If not, our society will undergo yet another transformation, creating a technically proficient, but culturally deficient world."

All of the women whose lives have been portrayed in this issue of *Perspectives* were well educated in the humanities and the social sciences. Also, all of them had personal visions and their own American Dreams, which they set out to fulfill, sometimes at great cost to themselves. Some of them experienced extreme hardship in their quest; yet, they persevered.

As you make your plans to teach the children in your Social Studies classes, have you developed a personal vision of the "American Dream"? Let's challenge ourselves. Let's go forth and rededicate ourselves to the ideals exemplified by the Nebraska women who are portrayed in this issue of *Perspectives*. Let's help our students to identify their American Dream and their personal vision of the future, and let's help them to develop the courage to pursue excellence at all times in their lives.

Charles M. Godwin
Executive Secretary

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Membership in the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies is open to individuals associated with social studies education in Nebraska. If you are not a member, you may join by completing the following form and submitting it with a $7.50 membership fee to Vernon Wood, Jr., North High School, 4323 North 37th Street, Omaha, NE 68111.

Name ....

Home Adress ....
Phone

City ....
Zip Code

School Name ....

School Address ....
Street City Zip Code

Position ....

Subjects Taught ....

.... Grade Level ....

Type of Membership

— Active Dues ($7.50)	— Institutional Dues ($7.50) for elementary teachers who wish to join collectively as one school	— Student Dues ($2.50)

Also, if you are interested in contributing an article or information to the Nebraska State Council, you are welcome to do so. Please send articles or dates for tentative articles to:

Susan Pierce, 4221 Normal Blvd., #8, Lincoln, NE 68506